

Curious assumed that the author was Daniel, though he allowed that it could be about a character named Daniel, for so the books Ruth and Esther were titled.

"How many millions have inherited the name Daniel?" he asked himself. "Yet I suppose only a small fraction of their parents had this book in mind."

Curious knew three Daniels, all of whom he respected, so he had no difficulty imagining a stream of Daniels stretching back to the man featured in this book, which led him to temper his original opinion.

"It must be *about* him, because great men are too busy doing great things to write autobiographies. However, he may have written about events he knew better than anyone."

1 *in the third year of the reign of king Jehoiakim of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand ...*

"Whoever wrote this was in perfect agreement with the justice of the siege of Jerusalem," Curious said. "But he could not have known of the horrors of that and the subsequent sieges and still been at peace with the idea that the Lord had done it."

You must remember, Curious, that Jerusalem had already lost its sovereignty, defeated by Egypt and then Babylon. Jehoiakim had reigned three years as Babylon's vassal when he reverted back to Egypt, which was an invitation for severe treatment by Nebuchadnezzar, who was Yahweh's servant, according to Jeremiah.

"That happened before the final siege and destruction of Jerusalem, but no doubt this account was written later, and it sounds like the author is comfortable with what Babylon ultimately did to the City of God."

That may be true, but the important thing is, are you comfortable with it?

... along with some of the vessels of the house of God, and he carried them back to the land of Shinar, to the house of his gods, and he placed the vessels in the treasure-house of his gods.

"It looked like the Lord had conceded and joined with the Babylonian gods. This must have devastated the faith of any survivors of the siege. Perhaps Daniel was among the slaves that Nebuchadnezzar would have selected to be taught his language and religion and added to his staff of eunuchs."

3 *And the king instructed Ashpenaz, the chief of his eunuchs, to select children of Israel from the royal family and the nobility, handsome youths without blemish who understood all wisdom, were educated in science, and were fit to stand in the king's palace. And he was charged to see that they be instructed in the language and lore of the Chaldeans.*

"This reveals his admiration for Hebrew stock, but he would have had no respect for their God if he purposed to adapt them to his advantage. But if I know Daniels, this Daniel will not be easy to convert."

Yes, and remember Joseph, Curious.

"Joseph comes to mind. I shouldn't wonder if Daniel gets promoted to run the kingdom!"

Along with that will come jealousy and enemies, of course.

"If Daniel achieves something like that and yet keeps his faith in God, it's no wonder his name has been adopted by so many!"

5 *And the king made arrangements for them to have a daily portion of the royal food and of the wine which he drank. And he determined that they be educated three years, after which they were to stand before the king.*

"Will anything be left of their Jewish heritage after three years of reprogramming?"

Most importantly, will they abandon their God who appears to have abandoned his people and deserted his temple?

"Now, to make Chaldeans of them it only remains to have their names changed."

Now, among them were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, children of Judah to whom the chief of the eunuchs gave the names Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach; and Abednego.

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"So each gets his native name and his foreign name recorded in holy writ. That's unusual," Curious asserted. "Is the reader expected to know what the names mean?"

Most significantly, the names show that this book was put together by someone possessing detailed historical information. Be patient, Curious, you will encounter in a later chapter a hint about the meaning of Belteshazzar. The other Babylonian names include cryptic references to their gods as well. On the other hand, the Hebrew names form significant phrases. Daniel means "God is my Judge." Hananiah means "God has favored." Mishael means "He is what God is." Azariah means "Yahweh has helped."

"Only 'Daniel' sounds good to me. If Daniel wrote this book, he won't be referring to himself always as Belteshazzar."

Yes, and his personal point of view will become evident.

8 Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the king's rich food nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he made a request to the chief of the eunuchs that he might avoid defiling himself.

"That took courage," Curious declared. "It shows resistance to the program designed to secure his dedication to Babylon and its king. This is contrary to Solomon's advice."

Determining to avoid forbidden food, especially meat that had been offered to idols, shows Daniel was well bred. But his dedication to the king may surprise you.

9 Now, God granted kindness and compassion toward Daniel in the sight of the chief of the eunuchs, who answered, "I fear that my lord the king, having personally appointed your food and your drink, will see your faces looking worse than those of other youths of your own age. Would you endanger my head with the king?"

"That puts this Ashpenaz fellow in a tight spot," Curious noted.

Yes, How will he manage his risk and still accommodate Daniel's request?

"Most likely he'll solve his problem by passing the buck to an underling."

11 Then Daniel took his request to the steward whom the chief of the eunuchs had appointed to oversee Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.

"Try your servants ten days, I beseech you," Daniel said. "Have them give us vegetables to eat and water to drink. Then compare our faces with the faces of the youths who dine on the king's dainties, and deal with your servants according to what you see."

Ten days is a short time. What do you think is the reason, Curious?

"I don't think Daniel came up with that idea on his own. He would be smart enough to know that ten days is not long enough for a difference in diet to make a noticeable difference in their appearances."

The steward might have been thinking that a brief experiment could be conducted without stopping the delivery of meat from the royal kitchen, which would reduce the risk of drawing the king's attention.

14 He listened to them in this matter and tried them ten days. And after ten days their appearance was better: they were fatter in flesh than the youths who had eaten the king's rich food. So the steward took away their royal food and the wine which they were supposed to drink and gave them vegetables.

"Ah, there was a simple measure of success. I'm not too surprised, but it seems so contrary to health nowadays. All they had to do was stuff themselves with huge helpings of corn and rice for ten days."

But let's assume Daniel wasn't obese.

17 Now as for these four youths, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom; and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams. And at the end of the days which the king had appointed for bringing them in, the chief of the eunuchs brought the youths in before Nebuchadnezzar. The king examined

them, and none were like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Therefore, they received appointments to stand before the king. And in every matter of wisdom and understanding, concerning which the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters that were in all his realm.

Now, who wrote that paragraph, Curious?

"Could it be written by Daniel? I'm not sure. Whoever wrote this was either very proud of those Jewish boys or very unimpressed with the king's professional wizards."

I agree. The magicians and enchanters might have been so foolish and fraudulent that to be very much wiser than they on any matter was not impossible.

21 And Daniel continued in the king's service even to the first year of King Cyrus.

"That says it all right there," said Curious. **"No wonder Daniel is famous."**

Yes, this is very unusual. Daniel was gifted as a politician as well.

2 *In the second year of his reign, Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams which troubled his spirit, and his sleep departed from him. And he commanded that the magicians, the enchanters, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans be summoned to tell the king his dreams. So they came in and stood before the king. And the king said to them, "I have dreamed a dream, and my spirit is troubled to know the dream."*

4 Then the Chaldeans spoke to the king in the Aramaic language: "O king, live forever. Tell your servants the dream, and we will give the interpretation."

The king answered the Chaldeans, saying, "The thing is gone from me. If you do not make known to me the dream and the interpretation thereof, you will be cut in pieces and your houses will be made a dunghill. But if you show me the dream and the interpretation thereof, you will receive

from me gifts and rewards and great honor; therefore show me the dream and the interpretation thereof."

"That's extreme rhetoric by any standard," said Curious.

It sounds like he's been driven mad by the dream. But don't you think they've heard that same threat before?

7 Again, their response was, "Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation."

"They're used to threats from their king that go nowhere. In fact, that ridiculous penalty and the unreasonable reward might be conventional palace rhetoric."

Because it's in this book you can be sure it will resolve in an unusual manner.

The king answered, "I know for certain that you are trying to buy time because it is clear to you that the thing has escaped my memory. But if you do not make the dream known to me, there is but one law that applies to you, for you have prepared lying and corrupt words to feed me until the matter goes away. Now, tell me the dream, and then I will know that you can show me its interpretation."

Nebuchadnezzar was no dummy. He knew they would fabricate a story and tell him it was the very dream that eluded him if they were sure he had forgotten it. He said he had forgotten it, but had he?

"If Nebuchadnezzar had any hope that those charlatans could capture what had been in his mind, he knew it would require divine assistance," said Curious.

If any one of them had that ability, he would need to exercise it immediately or explain his reticence.

"They will be forced to admit that they have no such ability—meaning their interpretations would be irrelevant."

10 The Chaldeans answered the king, "There is no man on earth who can show the king his matter, and no king, lord, or ruler has ever asked such a thing of any magician, enchanter, or Chaldean. It is a rare thing that the

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king requires, and there is no one who can bring it back to the king except the gods who do not dwell with flesh."

12 This caused the king to become furious—exceedingly angry—and he ordered the destruction of all the wise men of Babylon. So the decree went forth: the wise men were to be slain. And so they sought to kill Daniel and his companions.

14 Then Daniel, exercising counsel and judgment, asked Arioch, the captain of the king's guard who had gone out to slay the wise men of Babylon, "Why is the king's decree so urgent?"

And Arioch explained it all to Daniel.

"It appears that while the decree may be officially urgent, the logistics, at least, draw out the execution of it," observed Curious.

No doubt Nebuchadnezzar knows that, but he hopes he has applied the right kind of pressure to get help from the gods.

16 And Daniel went in and requested of the king that if he would grant him some time, he would show the king the interpretation.

"Daniel received this extension because he didn't ask to hear the dream," said Curious.

Don't you think the king just welcomed an excuse to spare the likes of Daniel?

"Perhaps in his haste the king had neglected to make exceptions. Indeed, I think he had been looking for a reason to get rid of the useless leftovers from his father's Cabinet of wizards. Now Daniel and his friends are here, and they complicate the matter."

Regardless, God will get glory out of this. Don't forget to look for that.

17 Then Daniel went to his house and explained the matter to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions. They would beg mercies from the God of heaven concerning the king's secret so that Daniel and his companions might not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.

"So Daniel believed Nebuchadnezzar would do this. It's hard for me to believe, but that's easy for me to say," said Curious.

We have to assume that Daniel knew the king well by this time.

"It smells like a setup to me," Curious grumbled.

God moves the hearts of kings, so it may very well be a setup to that end.

19 Then the secret was revealed to Daniel in a vision of the night, after which Daniel blessed the God of heaven: "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever; for wisdom and might are his. He changes the times and the seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding; he reveals the deep and secret things; he knows what is in the darkness, and light dwells with him.

23 I thank you and praise you, O God of my fathers, who have given me wisdom and might and have now made known to me what we desired of you, for you have made the king's matter known to us.

24 Therefore, Daniel went to Arioch whom the king had appointed to destroy the wise men of Babylon; he went to him and said, "Do not destroy the wise men of Babylon; bring me in before the king, and I will show the interpretation to the king.

25 Then Arioch hastily brought Daniel before the king and said to him, "I have found a man of the children of the captivity of Judah who will make the interpretation known to the king."

That the captain's name is well recorded is another detail attesting that this is history—and making Arioch famous forever.

"This guy was trying to take credit for solving the king's dilemma," Curious said.

26 The king answered and said to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, "Are you able to make known to me the dream which I have seen, and the interpretation thereof?"

Daniel truly believed God had spoken.

"If Daniel gets it right and Nebuchadnezzar is overwhelmed, this has to be a setup. The credit goes to God a hundred percent."

Daniel

27 Daniel answered before the king, saying, "The secret the king demands cannot be shown to the king by enchanters, magicians, or astrologers, but there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and he has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days. The visions of your head upon your bed, are these:

29 You, O king, were thinking and wondering about what will come to pass hereafter; and he who reveals secrets has made known to you what will come to pass. But for my part, this secret was not discovered by wisdom that I possess more than anyone else alive but rather for the purpose of making the interpretation known to the king in order that the questions of your heart may be satisfied.

31 You, O king, looked and you saw a great image. This image that stood before you was enormous, exceedingly bright, and of fearsome aspect.

32 The head was of fine gold; its breast and arms were of silver; its belly and thighs were of bronze; its legs were of iron; and its feet were partly iron and partly clay. As you looked you saw a stone that was cut out without hands, and it smote the image on its feet of iron and clay and broke them in pieces.

35 Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were all broken in pieces at once and became like the chaff on summer threshing floors that the wind carries away and it disappears. As for the stone that smote the image, it became a great mountain, and it filled the whole earth.

36 This is the dream. And now we tell the interpretation of it to the king.

37 You, O king, are king of kings to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, the strength, and the glory; and wherever the children of men, beasts of the field, or birds of the air dwell he has given them into your hand and has made you to rule over them. You are the head of gold.

39 And after you another kingdom will rise that is inferior to you, followed by a third kingdom of bronze which will exert rule over all the earth. The fourth kingdom will be as strong as iron, and just as iron breaks and shatters all things, it will break in pieces and crush.

41 And whereas you saw the feet and toes being part potter's clay and part iron, it will be a divided kingdom; but the strength of iron will be in it, for, as you saw, the iron was mixed with miry clay. And as the toes of the feet were part iron and part clay, so the kingdom will be partly strong and partly broken. And as you saw the iron mixed with miry clay, they will intermingle their seed, but they will not adhere one to another, just as iron does not adhere to clay.

44 And in the days of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, nor will the sovereignty thereof pass to another people; but it will break up and terminate all these kingdoms, and it will stand forever.

45 For even as you saw a stone cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold, the great God has made known to the king what will come to pass hereafter. The dream is certain, and the interpretation is sure."

46 Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face and worshiped Daniel and commanded that he be presented an offering and incense.

"The king's overwhelming response proves that Nebuchadnezzar hadn't forgotten—or not completely forgotten—the dream. He had to conclude that Daniel was next to God for having access to it."

47 The king answered Daniel and said, "Of a truth your God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings and the master of mysteries, seeing as you have been able to reveal this secret."

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"This prophecy is absolutely fascinating," said Curious. "And why it was given via a pagan king is interesting too. And being validated by involving two independent minds is ingenious. But the really stunning thing is the grand sweep of history and the future of the world. If Babylon hadn't defeated Jerusalem we wouldn't have this!"

Clearly, the Roman Empire is the iron, and the stone is Christ and his body of believers. But what do you make of the feet and toes, Curious?

"The stone demolishes everything, not just the feet, so the overall picture isn't as clear-cut as it first appears to be."

Are any of those empires completely dead? Have they been ground to dust yet?

"If Babylon was the fountainhead of idolatry, you could say the Babylonian empire is still alive and well in the world."

And then there's Persia, the second kingdom, which is called Iran today.

"And the foundation that Greece laid down still supports Western nations."

The Roman empire crumbled, but Roman law still mingles with indigenous legal systems.

"The stone hasn't yet fulfilled this prophecy, so the toes of iron and clay are still with us. It's interesting about the intermingling, which well describes the royal families in England and Europe."

And the aristocracy continues to occupy positions of power over commoners.

"So one of these days God will set up his kingdom and smash them all to dust, leaving his nation secure, never again to be taken over by his enemies."

Which is Israel. There's no other way to read it. Now, is it somehow fitting that the head is the metal of the gods?

"Obviously, Nebuchadnezzar was interested in truth, not just religion."

If that were true, he would seek to learn more from Daniel.

"Of course he will take full advantage of Daniel. But I'm watching for God to turn the head of gold to spread his own glory."

48 Then the king made Daniel great and gave him many great gifts and made him to rule over the whole province of Babylon and to be chief governor over all the wise men of Babylon. And Daniel petitioned the king, and he appointed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego over the affairs of the province of Babylon; but Daniel was in the king's gate.

"He takes advantage of these Jews to relieve his administrative burden so he can work on building his religion. Now watch him set up some grand new way to worship their God that doesn't depend on Jewish custom."

3 *Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, the height of which was threescore cubits and its breadth was six cubits. He set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon.*

There you go, Curious, you pegged that one. What could it be but a super-tall idol to incarnate the great God of heaven.

2 Then Nebuchadnezzar the king summoned the satraps, the prefects and governors, the judges, the treasurers, the counselors, the magistrates, and all the rulers of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up. Then the herald cried aloud:

"To you it is commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, that when you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, harp, lyre, bagpipe, and all kinds of music, you must fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king has set up. Whoever fails to fall down and worship will within the hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace."

"Nebuchadnezzar formalized sin and invented hell right there," quipped Curious. "I like it: a religion well defined, without text or ambiguity, and easy to comply with."

Yes, besides being useless its only disadvantages were that it was impractical and soon to be abandoned.

7 *During that time, therefore, whenever the peoples heard the sound of the horn, flute, zither, harp, lyre, bagpipe, and all kinds of music, all they of various nationalities and languages fell down and worshiped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.*

"I think Nebuchadnezzar was impressed by Psalm 150 and was trying to surpass it," said Curious.

Was it orchestrated music, or random?

"The combined sound must have been horrible, not inspirational."

This was the dedication ceremony.

He believes that his golden statue being head and shoulders above all other idols secures his standing with all deities, even Daniel's God most high, I suppose."

Having total control over the nations politically, this man now has established himself as priest of a "most high" religion.

"But how is it going to be practical to carry this on after the dedication ceremony? Even at ninety feet the thing would not be visible more than a few miles away."

It's flat country, but that's why there had to be the loudest noise possible.

"I understand that the fiery furnace is a threat for maintaining orthodoxy, but who would report a nonconformist and be responsible for such cruelty?"

Think about it, Curious. You know who.

8 *Whereupon certain Chaldeans came in, bringing an accusation against the Jews. They reported to Nebuchadnezzar the king, saying: "O king, live for ever. You, O king, have made a decree that every man when he hears the sound of the horn, flute, zither, harp, lyre, bagpipe, and all sorts of music must fall down and worship the golden image; and anyone who does not fall down and worship will be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. Now, there are certain Jews whom you have appointed to rule over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. These men, O king,*

have disobeyed you; they do not serve your gods, nor do they worship the golden image that you have set up.

Daniel should have stopped those rascals before they got that far.

Where is Daniel, by the way?

13 *Then Nebuchadnezzar in a furious rage commanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego be brought to him; and they appeared before the king. Nebuchadnezzar spoke to them, saying, "Is it on purpose, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, that you do not serve my god nor worship the golden image which I have set up? Now, if you will be ready whenever you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, harp, lyre, bagpipe, and all kinds of music to fall down and worship the image that I have made, it is well; but if you refuse to worship, you will be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that god who will deliver you out of my hands?"*

"Yes, where is Daniel?"

We could speculate that he's away on some official business.

"Peoples, languages, and nations are included in the edict, so wherever he went he was not beyond its reach. If Daniel had written this chapter, he would have given some explanation."

This is very curious indeed. It's like a protective blessing rests on Daniel that supersedes the laws of the land. But if so, why would he not do something to defend his friends?

"Someone could be excused for thinking that God had lifted Daniel out of the world at this point without notifying either his friends or the king."

He can do that, and I believe he will do the same for his most useful servants at some time in the future.

It's simple: these Chaldeans were afraid to report Daniel because he was their master.

Maybe. That's a possibility, Curious.

And God must have told Daniel it would turn out well without his intervention.

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16 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego answered the king: "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to inform you of any change in this matter, for if this be done, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be informed, O king, that we will not serve your gods nor worship the golden image you have set up."

"If this book were all about Daniel, this chapter would not be in it," declared Curious.

So far, it's more about Nebuchadnezzar than Daniel.

"But I'll stick to my hunch that Nebuchadnezzar is going to be confronted directly by the Most High God whom he has already acknowledged, and his attempt at roasting his best servants will lead him another step along the way to understanding that there is no limit on what God will do to secure the faith of someone he has chosen to be his witness to the world."

19 Nebuchadnezzar was furious, and the form of his countenance turned against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. He commanded that they heat the furnace seven times more than it was meant to be heated. And he ordered certain mighty men who were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego before casting them into the burning fiery furnace.

"They have put the king in a tight place too," observed Curious. "Losing those boys will be a setback to his administration that will cost him time and trouble in the future.

He can do anything. Why can't he roast those Chaldeans instead?

His pride is controlling him, but he'll be delighted if they survive."

21 Then these three were bound with their leggings, their tunics, their mantles, and their other garments; and they were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. Because the king demanded urgency and the furnace had become exceedingly hot, the

flame of the fire slew the men who had taken Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego up. But it was only the three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, who plunged down, bound, into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

"The circumstances are that they would be dead before they hit the floor. So all the laws of physics would need to be set aside," said Curious.

Would that be a surprise?

"After reading this far in the Bible, I will not be surprised if God injects another set of laws on this occasion. And I have no doubt that they will survive; otherwise this story wouldn't be here. But the author is not Daniel."

Some readers will attempt to explain their survival by imagining that the cool air of the exceptionally strong draft is what saved them.

"There is one sure way to stop the skeptic from explaining away a miracle as a natural event: have God deliver it in person."

24 Then in astonishment King Nebuchadnezzar rose up hastily and spoke to his counselors: "Did we not cast three bound men into the midst of the fire?" They answered, "True, O king." He spoke to them again, saying, "Lo, I see four men loose walking in the midst of the fire, and they show no injury; and the aspect of the fourth is like a son of the gods!"

"It makes me shiver," said Curious. "This is the God of the Hebrews overriding the rules of thermodynamics to instill belief in a hard headed pagan king."

Why, Curious?

"Because this will mean more to the world than if it had happened in Israel. Now they will have no reason to disbelieve the Hebrew prophets."

Babylon was a unique opportunity.

"And what the demon masters of Babylon welcomed as an opportunity to bury the fame of Yahweh is turning out the opposite."

You seem to be pretty sure of that.

"They should have known Yahweh would get a book deal out of it."

26 Then Nebuchadnezzar approached the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, and he called out and said, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, you servants of the Most High God, come forth, and come hither!" Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego came forth out of the midst of the fire.

27 And the satraps, the deputies, the governors, and the king's counselors, being gathered to the occasion, saw that the fire had done no harm to the bodies of these men, nor was the hair on their heads singed, and neither had their leggings been darkened, nor had the smell of fire clung to them.

"Miracle upon miracle upon miracle," said Curious.

What more is there to say?

"Now, I'm trying to imagine what that furnace looked like."

If not strictly an instrument of capital punishment designed for public viewing, what could it be?

"A lime kiln comes to mind. It could be something like one of those where the charge of coal and lime goes in at the top. It's usually built against a cliff or else a ramp enables fuel and raw material to be hauled up and dumped down through the chimney."

Could the fire have been made seven times hotter than normal?

"Seven in this case is rhetorical and nominal. But they might have thrown in double the usual amount of fuel, making the hot gas that rushed up out of the chimney multiply the difficulty of throwing a live prisoner over the edge of the opening."

The motions it took to eject a heavy body into that blast would expose one to the intense heat. I can imagine it could be fatal.

"It would truly take a mighty man to fling a plump eunuch over the edge."

28 Nebuchadnezzar spoke and said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants who trusted in him and challenged the

king's command. They yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god except their own God.

29 Therefore, I make a decree applying to every people, nation, and language, that anyone saying anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, will be cut in pieces and their houses be made a dunghill; because there is no other god able to deliver from this kind of thing."

"There's that same exaggerated threat again." Curious noted. "As expected."

30 Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego in the province of Babylon.

Congratulations, Curious. You risked your reputation as a Bible expositor when you insisted that something like this was coming.

"I love that story," said Curious, "because by standing firm in the face of painful death those fellows caused knowledge of Yahweh and reverence for his name to be spread over the entire empire. If I were a song writer, I would make one up about Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego that would cause them to become more famous than Daniel who wasn't there to preserve his fame."

Don't omit Nebuchadnezzar's part.

"Yes, and Nebuchadnezzar had a lot to do with it too. We have to give him credit for embracing the truth most enthusiastically once it was made clear to him."

Why not write a song about him too?

"But Nebuchadnezzar doesn't deserve a song because he loves drama and is known to exaggerate. He should go beyond making absurd threats and testify in writing about a personal experience with God and send it throughout the empire."

That would be worthy of a chapter in this book!"

"But he's not there yet," said Curious.

4 Nebuchadnezzar the king, to all the peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth: Peace be multiplied unto you.

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2 It has seemed good to me to share the signs and wonders that the Most High God has worked for my benefit.

*How great are his signs,
and how mighty are his wonders!*

"Whoa, he's doing it!" exclaimed Curious.

*His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
and his dominion is from generation to generation.*

4 I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at rest in my house and flourishing in my palace when I had a frightening dream; the thoughts upon my bed and the visions in my head troubled me.

Is this man highly susceptible to troubling dreams, or is he living at a time in history when dreams make men mad?

"This one will be a doozy if it's worth translating into several languages and sending copies all over his domain," said Curious.

Yes, and this dream will stretch his credibility and maybe Daniel's too.

6 Therefore, I decreed that all the wise men of Babylon be brought before me, that they might give me the interpretation of the dream; and the magicians, the enchanters, the Chaldeans, and the astrologers came in. I related the dream to them, but they were not able to provide me with an interpretation.

"It's evident right there that this dream had a good effect on him because he didn't threaten to tear them in pieces this time even though they're no better than before."

Or at least he might have threatened them before he received the lesson from the dream, and now he omits that little detail in his testimony.

"No doubt Daniel will interpret it, but why wasn't Daniel included in that summons?"

It's understood that Daniel sends the rank-and-file wise men first.

8 At last Daniel came in before me, whose name is Belteshazzar (according to the name of my god) and in whom is the spirit of the holy gods; and I recounted the dream before him:

9 "O Belteshazzar, master of the magicians, because I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in you and no secret escapes you, tell me what manner of dream this is that I have had, and give me its interpretation.

Daniel is "master of the magicians" now. Would that be a formal title?

"If Daniel is chief magician, especially as a foreigner, he must be extremely careful."

And how did Nebuchadnezzar slant it?

"Obviously this chapter wasn't written by Daniel. Can we trust that Nebuchadnezzar will be truthful?"

He's definitely not in the same class with the Hebrew prophets.

10 These were the visions of my head which I saw upon my bed: I looked and beheld a tree of great height in the midst of the earth.

*The tree grew and became strong,
its height reached to heaven,
and it was seen all over the earth.*

*Its leaves were fair,
its fruit plentiful,
and in it provided food for all.*

*It gave shade to the beasts of the field,
the birds of the heavens lived on its branches,
and all creatures were fed from it.*

13 Then I beheld a watcher in these visions of my head upon my bed, a holy one coming down from heaven.

"That's a new one," said Curious. **"This is the first mention of a watcher. Is it a particular kind of angel?"**

Yes, and Nebuchadnezzar seemed to be familiar with the term. It appears in the writings of Enoch. But your guess is good.

14 He cried aloud, saying,

*"Hew down the tree;
cut off its branches;
shake off its leaves,
and scatter its fruit.*

*Let the beasts leave its shelter
and the fowls of the heavens flee its branches.*

Nevertheless, leave the stump with its roots in the earth and with a band of iron and bronze. In the tender grass of the field, let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his lot be with the beasts, in the grass of the earth."

"Suddenly, the stump becomes a man! The wise men wisely refused to say who it is."

It could not be more obvious.

"Let his heart be changed from man's, and let a beast's heart be given him; and let seven times pass over him."

"That's a bit vague. What times?"

"This is a decree of the watchers, a demand of the holy ones, to the intent that the living may know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever he will and sets over it even the lowest of men."

"Who is the poet here?" Curious wondered. **"I thought it was remarkable that Nebuchadnezzar expressed his dream in couplets. I didn't remark about it then, but now here's the watcher doing the same thing."**

Remember that he must have composed this letter some time after these events.

"I assume the words are not exactly what he would have written at the time it happened."

It's possible that it was written by a scribe who gave it his own artistic touch.

"There had to be versions in various languages, probably written by various scribes," said Curious.

Daniel may have been one of them.

"I have to assume that whatever got included in this book was approved by Daniel."

18 "This is the dream which I, King Nebuchadnezzar saw; and you, O Belteshazzar, must declare the interpretation since the wise men of my kingdom were unable to make known the interpretation; but you are able, for the spirit of the holy gods is in you."

19 Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was stricken dumb for a while as his thoughts troubled him.

The king reassured him, saying, "Belteshazzar, let not the dream or the interpretation trouble you."

"Nebuchadnezzar had been using personal pronouns. This is a mark of it possibly being written by someone else."

A slip by a scribe, perhaps?

"A different scribe might have taken it from here."

Belteshazzar answered and said, "My lord, I would that the dream concerned those who hate you and its interpretation applied only to your adversaries."

20 The tree that you saw growing and strong, whose height touched heaven and whose sight reached all the earth, whose leaves were fair, whose fruit was plentiful, where food was there for all, where under this tree dwelt the beasts of the field, and upon its branches the birds of the heavens made their nests—this is you, O king, who became strong, your greatness having increased and reached to heaven, and your dominion to the end of the earth.

23 And whereas the king saw a watcher and a holy one coming down from heaven, saying, 'Hew down the tree and destroy it, but leave the stump and its roots banded with iron and bronze in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts of the field until seven times pass over him,' the interpretation, O king, is this, and it is the decree of the Most High which has come upon my lord the king:

25 You will be driven from men, and your dwelling will be with the beasts of the field; you will be made to eat grass as oxen do and will be wet with the dew of heaven, and seven times will pass over you until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men and gives it to whomever he will.

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26 And whereas the command that the stump and roots of the tree be left, so your kingdom will be kept for you until you have learned that the heavens do rule.

27 Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable to you: break away from your sins by doing righteous deeds, and from your perversity by showing mercy to the poor—in case your prosperity might be prolonged.”

“That would be virtually impossible,” Curious stated. “His policies affect everyone. Where there is injustice on the one hand someone benefits on the other.”

Yes, it takes an act of God to give a ruler wisdom for that.

“What was that proverb? ‘The king’s heart is in the hand of Yahweh like a stream of water, and he turns it wherever he wishes.’”

28 All this came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar.

“That’s almost incredible,” said Curious.

Do we have a narrator now writing the king’s letter? Or is that a triviality now?

“How much was symbolic, I wonder. ‘Seven times will pass’ doesn’t sound literal. And they didn’t indicate when it would happen.”

He may have ignored Daniel’s warning for that reason.

29 At the end of twelve months the king was walking atop the royal palace at Babylon when he spoke and said, “Is not this great Babylon, which I have built for a royal dwelling-place, all done by the might of my power? Is it not for the glory of my majesty?”

“It’s like the dream never happened,” said Curious.

If he knew it was inevitable, might he not have pushed it out of his thoughts by filling his mind with other matters?

“I think what did it was his first dream where he was the head of gold. That’s what stuck in his head.”

Yes, we all tend to be selective.

“I still maintain that this was a setup, and that’s where it started. It was a setup to get him to teach the world about the true God.

This monarch charged ahead without any awareness that when he employed Jews he would get special attention from the Most High monarch.

“Now it’s pretty clear that he has crossed a line, and it will take an audible, waking voice from heaven—not a dream needing interpretation, but a direct word from God telling him what to expect if he doesn’t repent.”

It’s too late, Curious. He had his chance to repent, and he let a year go by.

31 While the word was in the king’s mouth there fell a voice from heaven saying,

“O King Nebuchadnezzar, this word is for you: The kingdom has passed from you, and you will be driven from men, and you will dwell with the beasts of the field and made to eat grass as oxen do; and seven times will pass over you until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men and gives it to whomever he will.”

“Was it too late for him to repent? I think so, but then what was the purpose of the voice?”

That should not be too difficult for you, Curious.

33 Immediately, the word against Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled: he was driven from the company of men, and like an ox he ate grass, and his body became wet with the dew of heaven. His hair grew like eagles’ feathers and his nails like claws of a bird.

“Now, how long is seven times?” Curious wondered. “It had to be more than seven days, but seven years seems excessive.”

Something was accomplished. Seven is a term of fulfillment.

“This needed to be more than a penalty to be endured. If the voice from heaven had a purpose, it would be to shorten the time. At least that’s my theory as to why the duration was indefinite.”

34 “And at the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted up my eyes to heaven, and my understanding returned to me, and I blessed the Most

High, and I praised and honored him who lives forever, for his dominion is an everlasting dominion and his kingdom from generation to generation.

35 All the inhabitants of the earth are of no regard, for he does according to his will in the army of heaven as well as among the inhabitants of the earth. None can stay his hand, or say to him, 'What are you doing?'

36 At the same time my understanding returned to me; and for the benefit of my kingdom, my majesty and brightness returned to me; and my counselors and my lords looked to me again; and I was reestablished in my kingdom, and exceeding greatness was added to me."

Is he boasting again, Curious?

"This sounds like boasting, but I'm thinking of the iron and bronze bands that marked the stump. His full reinstatement was part of the prophesy. He doesn't consider it pride to state a glorious truth."

37 "Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven; for all his works are truth and his ways justice; and he is able to humble those who walk in pride."

"That's an abrupt ending to the letter. I wonder if it really was a letter that got sent out. It would not be news."

Perhaps the dream and its interpretation accomplished its purpose without needing to be fulfilled.

"And if not, why is it included in the Bible?"

Here is another possibility: Daniel cared for him and covered for him so that his condition remained largely unknown. Daniel wrote this "letter" as a religious document dictated by Nebuchadnezzar.

"They never considered the watcher's statement that God sets over a nation whoever he will, and it might even be a low-ranking man."

That applied to David ruling over Israel and now Daniel's ascendance in Babylon. But Satan and his demons are generally permitted to select and promote rulers to their own advantage.

5 *Belshazzar the king held a great feast for a thousand of his lords, and he drank wine before the thousand.*

"At first I thought this was saying Daniel had become king and a drunkard. But no, it's a similar name—and that would be impossible even if the name was the same," Curious confessed.

Both names in their meanings call for protection from the pagan god *Bel*, or *Baal*. Certainly Daniel had no need of that, which even Nebuchadnezzar recognized when he called him by his native Jewish name.

Was this what we call a wine-tasting event, or was it something else? No other purpose or entertainment was mentioned.

2 Belshazzar, while he tasted the wine, commanded that they bring the gold and silver vessels which Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem—so that the king and his lords, his wives and his concubines, might drink from them.

3 Then they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God which was in Jerusalem; and the king and his lords, his wives and his concubines drank from them. They drank wine and praised the gods of gold and of silver, of bronze, of iron, of wood, and of stone.

There's your purpose, Curious. It was ostensibly a religious event.

"How could this man be so dismissive of his father's testimony about Yahweh? It's hard to believe he was actually that irresponsible if he was Nebuchadnezzar's son."

Behold a man who was not well qualified to be king. (Remember, there was no separate word for grandson, and son can mean predecessor. Belshazzar became coregent when his father was absent.)

"Nebuchadnezzar would not have shown such disrespect for Yahweh. This must have been an urgent appeal to their gods for protection," Curious guessed.

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5 *In that same hour there came forth the fingers of a man's hand, and it wrote upon the plastered wall of the king's palace over behind the lamp-stand. When the king saw the part of the hand that wrote, the king's countenance changed, his thoughts troubled him, the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against the other.*

"What a scene is enacted there! This must be the original 'handwriting on the wall.'"

You knew a little more of the Bible than you thought you did, Curious.

7 *The king cried aloud, "Bring in the enchanters, the Chaldeans, and the astrologers!" The king spoke and said to these wise men of Babylon, "Whoever reads this writing and shows me the interpretation thereof shall be clothed with purple and have a chain of gold about his neck, and he shall be the third ruler in the kingdom."*

"Why third and not second?" Curious wondered, because he had not heard what I said about his father. **"Was this a diarchy?"**

8 *Then all the king's wise men came in and looked, but they could not read the writing nor make the interpretation known to the king. Then King Belshazzar was greatly troubled, and his countenance was changed, and his lords were perplexed.*

10 *Then the queen, having heard from the king and his lords, came into the banquet house. The queen spoke and said, "O king, live forever. Let not your thoughts trouble you nor let your countenance be changed."*

"Who is this queen?" Curious wondered. **"She isn't one of Belshazzar's wives, apparently."**

"My guess is she was Nebuchadnezzar's queen."

"She wants no part of this drinking party, and except for the formalities, she speaks to the king as if he's a child."

11 *"There is a man in your kingdom in whom is the spirit of the holy gods. In the days of your father, illumination*

and understanding and wisdom like the wisdom of the gods were found in him by king Nebuchadnezzar, your father, and your father made him master of the magicians, the enchanters, the Chaldeans, and the astrologers because an excellent spirit with knowledge and understanding for interpreting dreams, explaining riddles, and solving difficult problems were found in this Daniel whom the king named Belteshazzar. Now let Daniel be called, and he will show the interpretation."

"This particular queen speaks well and thinks very highly of Daniel."

And she was telling everyone within hearing how foolish Belshazzar was for not calling on Daniel.

13 *Then Daniel was brought in before the king. The king spoke and said to Daniel, "Are you that Daniel of the children of the captivity of Judah whom the king my father brought out of Judah? I have heard of you, that the spirit of the gods is in you, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom are found in you."*

If he had known about Daniel, why did he waste time and risk getting a false interpretation? What do you say, Curious?

"I say, Daniel was reluctant to come because he had tried counseling the king before and found him wanting."

15 *"And now these wise men and enchanters have been brought before me in order that they might read this writing and make known to me the interpretation thereof; but they could not show the interpretation of the thing. But I have heard that you can give interpretations and dissolve doubts."*

Belshazzar takes credit for the queen's idea, of course.

"It sounds like Belshazzar had lost touch with Daniel's ministry, and Daniel preferred that it be that way."

If Belshazzar and his nobles had gathered to praise their gods for the high city walls, Daniel would have his own plan.

"Now, if you can read the writing and make known to me the interpretation thereof, you shall be clothed with purple and have a chain of gold about your neck, and you shall be the third ruler in the kingdom."

There he goes again. Is it standard rhetoric?

"These kings always make lavish promises and threats."

Are you accusing this king of being insincere?

"He's not a Nebuchadnezzar. No one takes him seriously."

This may be the exception.

17 Then Daniel answered and said before the king, "Let your gifts be to yourself, and give your rewards to another; nevertheless, I will read the writing to the king and make the interpretation known to him."

"In other words, 'Keep your crown.' Daniel didn't think it was worth much."

This would be a perfect time for a lecture, because he has the king's full attention.

18 "O king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar your father the kingdom as well as greatness and glory and majesty. And because of the greatness that he gave him, all the peoples, nations, and languages trembled with fear before him. Whom he would he slew, and whom he would he kept alive; whom he would he raised up, and whom he would he put down. 20 But when his heart was lifted up and his spirit was hardened such that he became motivated by pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him; and he was driven from the sons of men, and his heart was made like the heart of a beast, and his dwelling was with the wild asses. He was fed with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven until he knew that the Most High God rules in the kingdom of men and that he sets up over it whomever he will.

22 "And you his son, O Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, though you knew all this, but have lifted yourself up against the Lord of heaven: they have brought the vessels of his house before you, and you and your lords, your wives, and your concubines have drunk wine from them; and you have praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood, and stone which see not nor do they hear nor do they know; and you have not glorified the God who holds your breath and all your ways in his hand.

24 The palm of that hand was sent from him, this writing was inscribed by it, and these are the words that were inscribed: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.

26 This is the interpretation of the thing. MENE: God has numbered the days of your kingdom and brought it to an end. TEKEL: you are weighed in the balances and are found wanting. PERES: your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians."

29 Then Belshazzar gave the command, and they clothed Daniel with purple and put a chain of gold about his neck, and the proclamation concerning him was made that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom.

"Now Daniel accepts it, knowing Belshazzar is done. This is funny." Curious laughed.

30 During that night Belshazzar, the Chaldean king, was slain. And Darius the Mede, who was sixty-two years old, received the kingdom.

"It's already been stated that Daniel's career extends beyond this point," Curious recalled. **"No doubt Daniel knew the handwriting was on the wall and had gotten himself accepted by the next administration."**

6 *It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom a hundred and twenty satraps who would be stationed throughout the whole kingdom; and over them he assigned three commissioners, of whom Daniel was one, to whom the satraps were accountable in*

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order that the king should suffer no loss.

3 Now, this Daniel became distinguished above the commissioners and satraps because of the excellent spirit that was in him; and the king considered setting him over the whole realm.

"This guy is absolutely amazing," said Curious. "He always rises to the top."

He must be an old man by now. How does he do it?

"Now that Jerusalem and the temple are gone, he's God's witness to the world."

Note that his record is cleaner than any man since Joseph.

"Being a eunuch might have been an advantage."

No doubt he's still chief magician, which would set him apart.

"I mean, it's amazing that he has achieved this, being a Jew in a foreign culture."

4 Then the commissioners and satraps tried to find something amiss in Daniel's service to the kingdom, but they could find no such occasion nor any failure, for he was faithful and had made no errors nor was any fault found in him.

5 Then these men said, "We will not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God."

6 Then these commissioners and satraps assembled to petition the king, and said to him, "King Darius, live for ever. All the commissioners of the kingdom, their deputies and the satraps, the counselors and the governors, have consulted together to establish a royal statute and to make a strong edict, that whoever shall ask a petition of any god or man for thirty days, save of you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions. Now, O king, establish the edict and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be altered. Wherefore, king Darius signed the writing and the interdict.

10 And when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house (now his windows were open in his chamber toward Jerusalem) and he knelt upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he had before.

"I don't see how they can get Daniel on this because he's only thanking God. The edict only mentioned petitions."

11 Then these men assembled together and found Daniel making petition and supplication before his God.

"They assumed he was asking God for favors because that's all they would ever do."

No doubt Daniel prayed in Hebrew. Was he even praying audibly?

"They had planned this, so it didn't matter what Daniel was saying."

Daniel knew exactly what they were doing.

"I think Daniel knew it would backfire. They're the ones going to be eaten by the lions. I'm getting the hang of this Daniel lore."

Well, Daniel knows he is highly favored by God as well as the king and that he has nothing to fear.

"I can almost hear him chuckling when he sees them spying on him."

Then they came and spoke before the king concerning the king's edict: "Have you not signed an edict that every man that makes a prayer to any god or man within thirty days, save unto you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions?" The king answered and said, "This is true according to the law of the Medes and Persians which cannot be altered."

13 Then they answered and said to the king, "That Daniel, who is of the children of the captivity of Judah, regards neither you, O king, nor the edict that you have signed, but makes his prayer three times a day.

14 Then the king, when he heard these words, was sorely displeased and set his heart on how to deliver Daniel; and he labored until sunset to rescue him.

Daniel

What sort of labor would have the potential to rescue Daniel?

"The king would be fervently petitioning God to protect Daniel from harm. That's what I think," said Curious.

15 Then these men assembled together to the king and said to the king, "Know, O king, that it is a law of the Medes and Persians, that no edict or statute which the king establishes may be changed."

"First the king tried doing nothing, but that didn't work," said Curious.

16 Then the king gave the command and they brought Daniel in order to cast him into the den of lions. The king spoke and said to Daniel, "Your God whom you serve continually—he will deliver you."

"This is wonderful," said Curious. **"The king had received assurance that Daniel would survive."**

And a stone was brought and laid upon the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of his lords, so that nothing could be changed concerning Daniel's condition.

18 Then the king went to his palace and passed the night fasting; neither were instruments of music brought before him, and his sleep fled from him.

But he's not completely confident.

"I wouldn't hold this against him."

19 Then the king arose very early in the morning and went in haste to the den of lions. And when he came near to Daniel in the den, he cried in a lamenting voice, and the king spoke and said to Daniel, "O Daniel, servant of the living God, is your God whom you serve continually able to deliver you from the lions?"

21 Then Daniel said to the king, "O king, live for ever. My God has sent his angel, and has shut the lions' mouths, and they have not hurt me because I was found innocent before him; and also before you, O king, I have done no harm."

23 Then the king was exceedingly glad, and he commanded that they take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no injury was found on him because he had trusted in his God.

24 And the king issued a command, and they brought those men that had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the den of lions—they, their children, and their wives—and the lions had mastery over them and broke all their bones in pieces before they came to the bottom of the den.

"That cinched Daniel's career," Curious declared. **"No one dared accuse him of anything after that, I'm sure."**

I'm just curious: What do you think of the king's idea of justice?

"If those wives had been wise, they would have dissuaded their husbands from pulling that stunt. And no wife from then on would try to get rid of her husband by advising him to do something that would get him killed."

That's terribly harsh, Curious. And what about the innocent children?

"I know there's little justice in what Darius did, but I like him anyway."

Do you think someone stretched the truth?

"Broke all their bones in pieces before they hit the bottom of the den? That's a good one. I know what the author was trying to say."

25 Then king Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth:

"Peace be multiplied to you. I decree that in all the dominion of my kingdom, men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel; for he is the living God, steadfast forever, and his kingdom is that which will not be destroyed, and his dominion will continue even to the end. He delivers and rescues, and he works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth, and he has delivered Daniel from the power of the lions."

28 So this Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius, and during the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

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7 *In the first year of Belshazzar, king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream and saw visions in his head as he lay upon his bed. For the record, he told the sum of the matters: Daniel answered and said, "Behold, in my vision by night the four winds of heaven broke forth upon the great sea, and four great beasts came up from the sea, each one different from the others."*

"Four winds and four beasts. How significant is that?"

Is there anything of literal substance there, Curious?

"It sounds simultaneous, like the four winds somehow converged and tornado-like pulled four large animals up out of the sea."

I agree. You've just answered my question in the negative.

"'Four' is the only word that can be taken at face value."

The other words stand for something else, and it's obvious what they mean.

"A particular wind is always from a particular direction, so 'four winds' implies four different directions or geographical locations. Literal winds are atmospheric, so winds from heaven would mean influences from the spiritual realm."

What about the sea?

"The sea symbolizes nations. I remember Isaiah using it that way in the couplet,

*The abundance of the sea will be turned to you,
The wealth of the nations will come to you."*

Keep going. How do nations relate to this case?

"Diverse beasts would be diverse nations or empires."

4 "The first was like a lion and had eagle's wings. I beheld it until the wings thereof were plucked and it was lifted up from the earth and made to stand upon two feet as a man; and a man's heart was given to it."

"I can only see Nebuchadnezzar's conversion in this," Curious confessed. "His Babylonian Empire must be the lion."

The winged lion was Babylon's symbol, which you could easily discover if you were curious enough.

5 "And, behold, another beast; this one resembled a bear, and it was raised up on one side, and three ribs were in its mouth between its teeth; and they said to it: 'Arise, devour much flesh.'

"It has now become a sequence," Curious noted. "I see the Medes and Persians in the bear, because they devoured Babylon when Belshazzar was found wanting."

What could "raised up on one side" mean?

"Emperor Cyrus the Great was held in high esteem, and the Persians dominated the Medes according to this lopsided bear."

That's interesting, Curious. Now what about those ribs?

"Somebody, somewhere, gave up some ribs. Curiously, the somebody is prompting the bear to devour whole bodies."

You haven't explained anything, Curious. What do the ribs represent?

"Maybe the three ribs are three cities Cyrus captured without destroying them, and such initial successes led him to strengthen and expand his empire."

There's much to know about the Persian expansion, yet much remains unknown.

"Daniel wasn't puzzled by it," said Curious. "I'll have to let it be his secret."

6 "After this I beheld, and, lo, I saw another beast, like a leopard, having upon its back four wings of a bird; this beast also had four heads, and dominion was given to it."

"These beasts are looking like another version of the four kingdoms in Nebuchadnezzar's dream," Curious remarked. "Only here we get more detail. This swift beast represents Alexander the Great's rapid conquests."

Certainly. And the four of heads would be his four generals.

"Dominion was *given* to him. That explains his amazing success."

Just as Daniel had said of the bronze belly and thighs, he rules over the earth.

7 *"After this, behold, I saw in the night visions of a fourth beast, terrible and powerful and exceedingly strong, and it had great iron teeth. It devoured and broke in pieces and stamped the residue with its feet. And it was different from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns.*

"So this is what the legs of iron and the feet combined of iron and clay represented in a truncated manner," said Curious. "*Terrible and powerful and exceedingly strong* needs no interpretation, and applying this vision to the Roman Empire is straightforward."

Then are the feet of the statue the same as the horns on this beast?

"The horns had to be ten because toes come in tens," said Curious.

I thought you might be curious about this and answer my question with some reason. Or weren't you serious?

"The feet on this beast have no weakness, so if the toes of the statue have a counterpart here, the horns aren't a perfect fit because they leave out the partly strong, partly weak aspect of the divided kingdom."

Let's get to the main thing, Curious. If this beast is ancient Rome, what does ten have to do with it?

"I'm pretty sure there were more than ten Roman emperors, because they tended not to last very long," said Curious.

Then what are the ten horns? (Curious was reading the next verse because he knew he couldn't get his head around this without more information.)

8 *"I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another horn, a little one, before which three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots; and, behold, in this horn there were eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth speaking great things.*

"Here's a new dimension!" said Curious. "The statue and beast-images so far have been essentially static, like each one could be drawn by an artist in a single picture. Now there's enough action in these few words to inspire a story in one's imagination."

Could this be predicting something that happened during the Roman Empire?

"I suspected that the number ten was symbolic. If so, is the three symbolic and could be more or less than three? Or can ten be symbolic of all the rulers while literally three of some faction got symbolically uprooted?"

That's a lot of "symbolic," Curious. Go ahead and make something of your suspicion or let it be literal.

"The little horn leaves little doubt, however. So the three that got supplanted by it were incompatible with little big mouth."

They were pulled up by the roots. How could he accomplish that?

"Three nations get consolidated into one under one dictator."

Similar events have happened and may happen again. But keep reading.

9 *"I beheld until thrones were placed, and one who was ancient of days was seated:*

*his raiment was white as snow,
and the hair of his head was like pure wool;*

*his throne was fiery flames,
and the wheels thereof burning fire.*

*A stream of fire issued
and came forth from before him.*

*Thousands of thousands ministered
to him,
and ten thousand times ten thousand
stood before him.*

*The judgment was set,
and the books were opened.*

"That's when God puts a stop to all the nonsense," said Curious. "So there's no point in guessing who the little horn is because he hasn't happened yet."

11 *"I kept looking at that time because of the great words which the voice of the horn spoke; I beheld even until the beast was slain and its body destroyed, and it was given to be burned with fire.*

"Obviously that wasn't the Roman Empire."

But something like it could arise in the future.

Curious Looks at the Bible

"But from Daniel's viewpoint, hundreds of years B.C., another empire like it in the far future could well appear as one with it."

The same demonic powers that shaped ancient Rome are eager to try again.

12 "And as for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, yet their lives were prolonged for a season and a time.

"Apparently, those empires, though no longer world-class powers, have a legacy that will continue for some time."

Not some time: it says, a season and a time.

"Whatever that season may be, it will be a definite time."

That's brilliant, Curious.

13 "I looked in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came even to the ancient of days, and they brought him near before him.

"Certainly this is significant, but where did he come from?" Curious demanded.

Indeed, this man is extremely significant, Curious. You can figure this out.

"Is he a man or not?"

He is not a regular man, obviously.

"If the context means anything, he will rule all the nations of the world."

14 "And there was given to him dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and languages should serve him.

His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which will not pass away, and his kingdom is that which will not be destroyed.

"This must be the stone in Nebuchadnezzar's dream that struck the image and became a great mountain that filled the whole earth!"

Indeed, he is more than a man.

"The stone was cut by no human hand from a mountain that stood apart from the image. I take that to mean this man will have a miraculous birth and by a decree of God he will defeat whatever is left of the beasts."

It was with the clouds of heaven that he was brought before the ancient of days. What does that signify?

"The visible presence of God has been seen as a cloud."

So the suggestion here is that this man is a visible manifestation of God.

"That would make perfect sense if he is capable of ruling the world."

Also he is a stone cut from a mountain.

"And the mountain would be Israel."

15 "As for me, Daniel, my spirit was grieved in the midst of my body, and the visions of my head troubled me. I came near to one of them that stood by and asked him the truth concerning all this. So he told me, and made me know the interpretation of the things.

"Something here is not right," said Curious. "Daniel had no trouble interpreting such things before. Why is he unable to do it now?"

17 "These great beasts, which are four, are four kings that will arise out of the earth. But the saints of the Most High will receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever."

"There's no ambiguity in that summary," Curious admitted.

But the devil is in the details, don't you know?

19 "Then I desired to know the truth concerning the fourth beast, which was diverse from all of them, exceedingly terrible, whose teeth were of iron and its nails bronze, which devoured, broke in pieces, and stamped the residue with its feet; and concerning the ten horns that were on its head, and the other that came up, and before which three fell, even that horn that had eyes and a mouth that spoke great things, whose look was more stout than its fellows.

"When this transpires there should be no doubt," said Curious. **"He sounds like big trouble in the future, but Daniel is after more details."**

21 "I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints and prevailed against them until the ancient of days came and judgment was given to the saints of the Most High and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom."

"So it looks like the saints will be unable to defeat the fourth beast when the time comes and that little horn is revealed."

In the context here, this can only be about the future from where we stand.

23 "Thus he said, 'The fourth beast will be a fourth kingdom upon earth, which will be diverse from all the kingdoms and will devour the whole earth and will tread it down and break it in pieces.'

"That's repetitious," Curious complained, **"but it leaves no doubt that this version of the fourth beast is yet to come."**

So there should be no misunderstanding about what the demonic powers have in store for this earth.

"It appears that the beast intends to ruin the earth and leave nothing of value for the saints to inherit—

He will wear out the saints who oppose his rise to power.

"if any saints remain beyond his reach."

24 'And as for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings will arise; and another will arise after them, and he will be different from the others, and he will take down three kings. And he will speak words against the Most High and will wear out the saints of the Most High; and he will try to change the times and the law; and they [the saints] will be given into his hand until a time, two times, and half a time.'

Technically, that's three-and-a-half years, Curious.

"I could name some that have attempted to do that already," he said.

Is it not interesting that we have been given this pattern of his rise to power that provides a means of identifying him?

"It's interesting that judgment, not victory in battle, was mentioned."

26 'But the court will convene, and they will take away his dominion and annihilate and destroy it forever.'

"Forever is good," said Curious, **"because so far the attempts to take over the world have kept coming regardless of setbacks."**

What court is that which will convene? Indeed, it sounds like a legal proceeding, not a kinetic war.

27 'And the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, will be given to the people of the saints of the Most High: his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom and all dominions will serve and obey him. Here is the end of the matter.'

"If there is a legal proceeding that determines the disposition of the beast, what is the dispute about? Is there a disagreement between God and Satan about something?"

Remember Satan's disagreement with Yahweh concerning Job's righteousness?

"That came up in the book of Job. Maybe this is that same disagreement being finally resolved, which would make sense because it never was settled in the book of Job."

Satan believed that any human creature would rebel like he did if sufficiently tempted. Why was it important that Job prove Satan wrong?

"These Saints of the Most High could be compared to Job. They get rewarded and Satan is finally condemned."

The unanswered question is, what made the saints of the Most High able to endure such testing?

"Job was very unusual. Yahweh even said there was no one like him. There must be more that hasn't been revealed."

"As for me, Daniel, my thoughts much troubled me, and my countenance was changed in me, but I kept the matter in my heart."

Curious Looks at the Bible

8 *In the third year of the reign of king Belshazzar a vision appeared to me, Daniel, after that which appeared to me at first. When I had this vision I was in the palace in Shushan, which is in the province of Elam. In this vision I was by the Ulai Canal.*

"Two years have passed without a notable vision," said Curious. "But what more could be said about the succession of empires?"

3 *I lifted up my eyes and looked, and behold, there stood before the canal a ram with two horns. The two horns were high, but one was higher than the other, and the higher came up last. I saw the ram pushing westward and northward and southward, and no beast could withstand him, neither was there any that could deliver out of his hand, but he did according to his will and magnified himself.*

"That would be Medo-Persia again, Daniel's employer," Curious quipped.

5 *And as I was considering this, behold, a male goat came from the west, charging over the face of the whole earth without touching the ground. This goat, which had a notable horn between his eyes, approached the ram that had the two horns (the one I saw standing by the canal) and ran upon him in the fury of his power. I saw him attack the ram; he was moved with anger against him and smote the ram and broke his two horns. The ram had no power to stand before him but was cast down to the ground and trampled upon, and none could deliver the ram out of his hand.*

"This is Alexander and the Greeks, no doubt. ... Appalling," said Curious.

What would you do if you were Daniel and you understood the import of this?

"Daniel will keep this to himself."

8 *And the male goat magnified himself exceedingly. And when he became strong his great horn was broken, and instead of it there came up four notable horns toward the four winds of heaven.*

Alexander died in Babylon without a successor, you know.

"Those are parts of Alexander's empire divided among four generals. I think someone said he had four prominent generals."

9 *And out of one of them came forth a little horn which waxed exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the glorious land.*

Here's another little puzzle for you.

"So there's no fixed connection between the little-horn symbol and a particular personage."

Any significance in "little?"

"They're like little parasites. I take it this one is drawn to the land where the glory of God was present."

You're right, because what else would Daniel mean by the "glorious land?" But at this juncture it was in ruins.

"Daniel thinks it will be glorious again."

Yes, when he speaks this way he implies that the glory will be restored.

10 *And it waxed great, even to the host of heaven; and some of the host and some of the stars it cast down to the ground and trampled upon them.*

There's a formidable interpretation challenge for you, Curious.

"So here's the same language that he used for Greece trampling down Persia. But the metaphor has moved on. This little waxed-great horn attacks the host of heaven: that would be Jerusalem and the faithful who host the God of heaven, saints of the Most High."

That's reasonable. Doesn't this sound a bit like what happens when the little horn rises out of the fourth beast.

"This is a development of the third beast, but I wouldn't be surprised to discover a reason for it being similar to that other little horn in the fourth beast."

Think hard, Curious.

"If they were both manifestations of Satan, that would be enough to explain similarity," Curious surmised.

And this is like (maybe worse) than the trouble recounted by Ezra and Nehemiah.

"So It's predicting an attack on Jerusalem and the temple by this offshoot of the ram. What else could it be referring to?"

Indeed, it seems to be a vision of the little horn inserting himself into the community of God.

11 Yes, it magnified itself to equal the prince of the host, disrupting the continuity [of the sacrifice], and the place of his sanctuary was cast down. And because of their transgression the host was given over to it along with the ritual; and it cast truth down to the ground. And so it did and prospered.

"I can't think of anything worse," Curious muttered.

I agree, if you mean what I think you mean. It's an incredibly succinct phrase, so it would be easy to miss the full impact.

"It's worse than lies."

Right. For a lie to be a lie, truth has to stand as its judge.

"It's worse than ignoring truth."

When truth is in disrepute, it's insanity.

"It's like truth had become rubbish."

That has a familiar ring.

"And this in the place where truth was supposed to be sacred."

All because of one energetic evil-doer?

"It says because of transgression. ... Does that mean there was ongoing corruption in Jerusalem for which they were being punished?"

Obviously. Can you imagine how this vision of more trouble in Jerusalem's future must have alarmed Daniel?

"Alarming? I think it's happening to us."

13 Then I heard a holy one speaking, and another holy one said to that certain one who spoke, "How many days, in the vision, is the interruption of the continual sacrifice and the transgression that causes desolation in which both the sanctuary and the host are to be trodden under foot?"

"That's what I would ask," said Curious.

No doubt they know Daniel would be speechless at this point.

"So someone asks it for him."

14 And he said to me, "Until two thousand three hundred evening-mornings have passed; then the sanctuary will be cleansed."

"That's what? ... Roughly six years or a little more they'll have to put up with this garbage," Curious said.

15 And it came to pass when I, Daniel, had seen the vision I sought to understand it; and, behold, there stood before me what appeared to be a man.

Daniel was a little more cautious than you were, Curious.

"Apparently he wants more details."

16 And I heard a man's voice calling out from the midst of the Ulai saying, "Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision!"

"Gabriel? Who is that?"

Have you never heard of the angel Gabriel, Curious? Have you never heard the story of John the Baptist's birth?

"I don't remember having encountered that name so far in the Bible. But he's obviously an important person because the name is still in use."

17 So he came near where I stood, and when he came I was frightened and fell upon my face; but he said to me, "Understand, O son of man, that the vision belongs to the time of the end."

"So the appearance of Gabriel is terrifying. Daniel is no Ezekiel, but still it would take a lot to terrify Daniel."

The atmosphere is highly charged.

18 Now as he was speaking with me, I fell into a deep sleep with my face toward the ground, but he touched me and set me upright. And he said, "Behold, I will make you know what will be in the latter time of the indignation; for it belongs to the appointed time of the end."

"This is interesting," said Curious.

Because Daniel couldn't stay awake?

"Something is opposed to Daniel hearing what Gabriel has to say."

Don't you get who Gabriel is?

"Gabriel must be a supernatural being."

Curious Looks at the Bible

20 *"The ram you saw that had the two horns: they are the kings of Media and Persia. The rough male goat is the kingdom of Greece, and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king. And as for the four that stood up in place of that which was broken, four kingdoms will stand up out of the nation, but not with his power.*

"That much we knew already," Curious complained.

Look, Curious. Now he goes into poetry.

"I see the next few verses are arranged in couplets, like the words from heaven in chapters four and seven."

23 *"And in the latter time of their kingdom,
when their transgressions are full,
a king will stand up,
fierce of face and skilled at intrigue.
By mighty power not merely his own
he will destroy extraordinarily;
he will succeed in all he desires,
destroying saints and mighty men.
Being insightful,
he will rule by deceit,
and magnifying himself in his heart
he will destroy many in their ease.
But when he stands up against the
prince of princes,
he will be broken without hands.
And the vision of the evenings and
mornings
which has been told is true;
but shutter the vision,
for it belongs to many days future."*

"There's the detail, but still rather obscure."

27 *And I, Daniel, fainted and was sick certain days. Then I rose up and did the king's business; and I wondered at the vision, but none understood it.*

"Why was it so difficult for them to understand what was inevitable—I mean Daniel and whoever he shared it with?"

It was about the future of *their* nation.

"I think he meant *why* it would happen, not *what* was going to happen."

9 *In the first year of Darius, son of Ahasuerus of the seed of the Medes who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans: in the first year of his reign I, Daniel, understood the number of the years for the accomplishing of the desolation of Jerusalem, even seventy years according to the words of Yahweh in the books of Jeremiah the prophet.*

Does this mean that Daniel did not know about the seventy years until this point?

"Daniel has been counting the years and knows that Jeremiah's prediction is about to be fulfilled."

So he must be expecting a decree for the release of the captives.

"But has the reason for the captivity been satisfied?"

You know as well as I do after reading Ezekiel that it's doubtful.

"What can one man do when his countrymen insist on misbehaving?"

3 *And I set my face unto the Lord God to seek him by prayer and supplication, with fasting and sackcloth and ashes. And I prayed to Yahweh my God and made confession and said ...*

"This man is serious," said Curious.

He believes he stands in the gap.

"There's no doubt in his mind that he has the ear of Yahweh."

That's singular but not the most unique part of what he's doing.

"Oh, Lord, the great and dreadful God who keeps covenant and lovingkindness with those who love him and keep his commandments: we have sinned and have dealt perversely and have done wickedly and have rebelled, even turning aside from your precepts and from your ordinances; neither have we hearkened unto your servants the prophets who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land.

Daniel is confessing like a priest on behalf of his people.

"Ezekiel might well have prayed like this."

7 *"O Lord, righteousness belongs to you, but to us belong faces of shame today: to the men of Judah, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to all Israel near and far through all the countries to which you have driven them because of their trespasses and transgressions against you.*

"I think that's awesome," said Curious. **"I mean especially the way he states it."**

Tell us more.

"Talk about owning up!"

No excuses.

"But God owns righteousness. I never thought of it like that."

In other words, righteousness is his call and unattainable by humanity. But what transgression was Daniel guilty of?

"He's not excluding himself," Curious noted.

Daniel was careful about observing ordinances of his religion.

"In fact, he lumps everyone together."

How can we explain this?

"There's something very winsome about Daniel even though he writes freely about his achievements."

He takes no pride apart from his country.

"I think it indicates that he understands the heart and purpose of God better than most."

You have something there, Curious.

"Daniel so loved his nation that he identified with their sin."

8 *"O Lord, shameful faces belong to us, our kings, our princes, and our fathers, because we have sinned against you; but mercies and forgiveness belong to the Lord our God. We have rebelled against him; we have not obeyed the voice of Yahweh our God, to walk in his laws which he set before us by his servants the prophets. Yes, all Israel have transgressed your law, turning aside and disobeying your voice; therefore, the curse that is written in the law of Moses, the servant of God, has been poured out upon us—for we have sinned against him. And he has carried out his words which he*

spoke against us and against the rulers who governed us by bringing upon us a great evil; for nothing under the whole heaven has been done like what has been brought upon Jerusalem.

"If human judges dismissed their sins, the true measure of their disobedience is now undeniable and visible to everyone."

How is it that Yahweh punishes his people so severely?

13 *"All this evil which is now upon us is written in the law of Moses, yet we have not entreated the favor of Yahweh our God by turning from our iniquities and being discerning about your truth. Therefore, Yahweh, you anticipated the evil and brought it upon us; for Yahweh our God is righteous in all he does, and we have not obeyed his voice.*

"They were warned and had it in writing. I take it no other people on earth had this instruction given to them."

Daniel understands well and will not complain.

"Surely he will beg for an end to the punishment."

He has alluded to the mercy and forgiveness that belongs to God. But remember, he has been counting the years in Jeremiah's prophecy.

15 *"And now, O Lord our God, you brought your people forth out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand and have gotten yourself renown even to this day while we have sinned; we have done wickedly. O Lord, according to all your righteousness let your anger and your wrath, I pray you, be turned away from your city Jerusalem, your holy mountain, because for our sins and for the iniquities of our fathers Jerusalem and your people have become an object of ridicule to all who are round about us.*

Does Daniel really think he is telling God something he doesn't already know?

"I can almost feel Daniel's excitement. He knows he stands at the turning point."

Curious Looks at the Bible

17 *"Now therefore, O our God, hearken to the prayer of your servant and to his supplications and cause your face to shine upon your desolate sanctuary for the Lord's sake. O my God, incline your ear and hear; open your eyes and behold our desolation and the city which is called by your name, for we do not present our supplications before you in our righteousness, but for your great mercies' sake."*

"What a beautiful summary," Curious added.

Remember in Ezra how this prayer was answered.

"Cyrus decreed the rebuilding of the sanctuary before the city walls were repaired—which made it more difficult."

That's interesting, Curious. I never connected that with Daniel's prayer.

19 *"O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for your own sake, O my God, because your city and your people are called by your name."*

"Four times he addresses God in this one final plea."

This is outstanding earnestness.

"He pleads for that which has already been foretold. Is that how prophecy works?" Curious wondered.

20 *And while I was speaking and praying and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel and presenting my supplication before Yahweh my God for the holy mountain of my God—yes, while I was speaking in prayer—the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, having been caused to fly swiftly, reached me about the time of the evening oblation.*

"I thought Gabriel was an angel. Now it's being said he's a man."

What kind of man would "fly swiftly?"

"But I suppose Daniel would faint again if Gabriel appeared in any other form."

22 *And he instructed me and talked with me and said, "O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you wisdom and understanding.*

"That would be an insult to Daniel if Gabriel were not superhuman," said Curious.

Remember, Daniel had complained that he did not understand his vision.

"That's my opinion, anyway," said Curious. "Daniel understood what the vision was about, but he was not clear on why and when those things would happen."

23 *"At the beginning of your supplications the commandment went forth, and I have come to tell you, for you are greatly beloved; therefore, consider the matter and understand the vision."*

"So it appears that a response to Daniel's prayer was set in motion before he finished the first verse."

Yes, and he will be getting more than he asked for.

24 *"Seventy weeks are decreed upon your people and upon your holy city to finish transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy."*

There's the overall plan, Curious, from a day not long after Daniel's day to the bringing in of everlasting righteousness.

"I assume that's 490 years, not days."

Yes, a week means a seven.

25 *"Know therefore and discern that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the anointed one, the prince, there will transpire seven weeks, and then threescore and two weeks: it will be built again, with street and moat, even in troubled times."*

Note how the starting point is set.

"I see it begins at a commandment, the date of which is well known. That's in Nehemiah."

Right. 444 B.C. on our calendar.

"The first important event called out after that is 69 sevens or 483 years later. I assume the anointed prince means Christ."

Yes, Christ is his title; the word means anointed. Christ Jesus is his formal name.

Daniel

"King David was anointed, and there was a promise of his dynasty continuing."

We can assume this was in the mind of every Jew.

"Adding 483 to 444 B.C. comes to 39 A.D. But I suspect it's not that simple."

For one thing, since there is no year zero, it comes to 40 A.D. But there's another way to look at it. Think hard, Curious.

"Okay, no year zero. If Jesus was in his mid-30's when he was crucified, which seems to me common knowledge, then this is off by five years."

Hint: how many days in a year?

"In ancient times years were not reckoned as precisely as they are now. The standard was 360 days. So I wonder how it comes out if the sixty-nine weeks are taken as 69 times seven times 360 days. ... That comes to 173,880 days. Converting it to 365-day years makes it 476 years and about five months. It shortens the period by about seven years, which puts the year Christ's death at 33 A.D."

Yes, and you can figure that Jesus was born in 2 B.C., which would make him 35 at his death. Are you impressed?

"That's impressive accuracy, and I should be impressed. But I would be disappointed if it failed to come out to the year."

Are you still curious? Are you going to try to get your head around this?

"This breaks my head, actually. It puts a definite time limit on the Greek empire because Jesus lived in Roman times. So Greece was predestined to fall to Rome! It had already been determined before Alexander got started! Has everything been predestined?"

It seems that way, but don't even try to get your head around it.

26 "And after the threescore and two weeks the anointed one will be cut off and will have nothing. And the people of the prince who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary, and the end thereof will come like a flood, and even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined."

"Now this is only 62 weeks."

Right. You're wondering what happened to the first seven weeks.

"There must be something significant that happened after the first 49 years."

The Persian empire ended. Also, the Old Testament writings came to a close about that time.

"And here's another destruction of Jerusalem which must be what the Romans did in 70 A.D. But the way it's stated is curious."

You're wondering who is the "prince who will come."

"The people of the prince who will come makes sense. That would be the enemies of Israel including the Roman army. But what Roman emperor deserved that distinction?"

Keep reading. You're asking a very good question.

And what about the 70th week?"

27 "And he will make a firm covenant with many for one week; and in the middle of the week he will cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease."

"This prince isn't dealing with the Jews the way a Roman emperor would have done. It sounds like a different occasion altogether. But it also appears to be the same prince!"

You will have to shift your thinking to the spiritual realm to make sense of it.

"Extreme abominations will come by the one who makes desolate and once again at the full end, which has been determined, when wrath will be poured out on the one who makes desolate."

"I'm counting three separate times this desolating prince appears."

They're not given in historical order. What they have in common is disruption of the temple sacrifices.

"One is when the temple was cut off after Christ was cut off. Another is at the 'full end,' when apparently a temple will have been built again, and a similar one when the temple is still standing, which must be the closest to Daniel's time. So I take it this prince is the devil behind the human actors."

Curious Looks at the Bible

10 *In the third year of Cyrus, king of Persia, a thing was revealed to Daniel, whose name was called Belteshazzar—and the thing was true—about a great warfare: and he understood the thing, and had understanding of the vision.*

“Someone added a nice little introduction there,” Curious surmised.

2 In those days I, Daniel, was mourning three whole weeks.

“He doesn’t say what he was mourning over. Was it the frightful future, the current condition of his country, or the moral poverty of his people?”

You speak like a preacher, Curious.

3 I ate no fine food: neither meat nor wine entered my mouth. Neither did I anoint myself at all until the completion of three whole weeks of days.

“He must have been alone all that time, eating stale bread, I suppose.”

A man of his stature would not be wandering around by himself.

“I think he’s pining for another vision.”

4 On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, when I was by the side of the great river, which is the Tigris, I lifted up my eyes and, behold, I saw a man clothed in linen and girded with pure gold of Uphaz; his body had the appearance of yellow jasper. There was about his face something like lightening, and his eyes flamed like torches; his arms and his feet shone like burnished bronze, and the sound of his voice was as the sound of a multitude.

“This is similar to what Ezekiel saw,” said Curious.

Ezekiel was as unusual as Daniel, but, as you know, he was much different.

“Ezekiel was extravagant compared to Daniel, but this brings them together a bit.”

They stand among a select few.

And I, Daniel, alone saw the vision; the men who were with me did not see the vision, but rather a great quaking fell upon them, and they fled to hide themselves.

“Once more Daniel stands alone,” Curious remarked.

What do you make of the vision?

“Daniel said he saw a man. At least it was more like a man than the divine appearances that Ezekiel witnessed.”

8 So I was left alone viewing this great vision, and there remained no power within me: my robustness was ruined, and I retained no strength.

Don’t you love the way he describes himself, Curious?

“Daniel described himself as robust? I don’t know about that. It would be more in character if he said his comeliness was turned to corruption.”

Where did you get that idea?

9 Yet I heard the voice of his words; and when I heard the voice of his words I fell into a deep sleep on my face with my face toward the ground.

“This is supernatural,” said Curious. “Or I should say an unnatural response.”

And painful for an old man.

10 And, behold, a hand touched me, which set me upon my knees and upon the palms of my hands.

“He doesn’t say it woke him up. But if a hand touches me when I’m sleeping it always wakes me up.”

How do you know that, Curious?

11 And he said to me, “O Daniel, you greatly beloved man, understand the words that I speak to you and stand upright, for to you I am now sent.” And when he had spoken this word to me, I stood, trembling.

“I guess he’s awake now, but is this the same man speaking to him whose face he described as being like lightening and whose voice sounded like a multitude?”

Isn’t it possible that Daniel himself did not know the answer to that?

“Was that God himself taking on somewhat of the form of a man? Or was it an angel appearing as a man?”

Doesn’t this remind you of his encounter with Gabriel?

Gabriel was not so frightening.

Daniel

12 Then he said to me, "Fear not, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard; and I am here because of your words."

"Well, this person is sent by God," Curious observed, **"and he doesn't seem to be quite human."**

A messenger from heaven for sure, and delivering an answer to Daniel's prayer.

"I hope he explains the delay. It would tell me a lot."

13 "The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia."

Does this tell you more than you wanted to know, Curious?

"My curiosity only goes so far in a case like this. This tells me too much already."

You're afraid of having opened a door that reveals something you're not prepared to deal with.

"This person, whatever he is, speaks as if he were contributing to a battle to prevent the overthrow of the Persian government."

And that simply doesn't add up, right?

"So the battle involves more than humans."

You're getting a glimpse of what goes on behind the scenes of human events. What he calls princes are angels.

"It was already said that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever he will."

Four times, at least.

"So these are his agents. But they are opposed by comparable powers. How could that be?"

Do you mean, how do we explain powers being comparable to the Most High?

"Rules of engagement! That has to be it."

In other words, there was a prior agreement between Yahweh and Satan.

"This illustrates that Satan succeeds by Yahweh's permission, which is perplexing."

There is legal issue and a great settlement being acted out on earth, Curious.

14 "Now I am here to make you understand what will befall your people in the latter days; for the vision is yet for many days."

"That puts a load of responsibility on Daniel," said Curious.

He will have to pass it on, but cautiously, which he has been doing already.

15 And when he had spoken to me as described by these words, I set my face toward the ground and was dumb."

"Evidently this is more fearsome than the lion's den," Curious quipped.

Perhaps in a certain way, but not that type of fear.

"I can't imagine what it would be like to have an important angel address me as 'greatly beloved.'"

Yes, and report on what he has been doing and excusing himself for being late!

"That initial vision of the man with eyes like torches must still be in his mind's eye."

16 And, behold, one in the likeness of the sons of men touched my lips; then I opened my mouth and spoke and said to him who stood before me, "O my lord, the vision has brought such distress upon me that I retain no strength. For how can the servant of this my lord talk with this my lord? There remains no strength in me and my breath is taken away."

This is solid evidence of a supernatural encounter. Daniel never cowered before humans all his life.

"Ezekiel would have taken this in stride," Curious thought.

18 Then the one resembling a man touched me again, and he strengthened me. And he said, "O man greatly beloved, fear not: peace be to you; be strong; yes, be strong." And when he spoke to me, I was strengthened and said, "Let my lord speak, for you have strengthened me."

Don't you sense something momentous coming, Curious?

"This is more than a dream or a vision. There's too much detail in this encounter."

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20 Then he said, "Do you know why I have come to you? I will be returning to fight with the prince of Persia, and while I have gone forth, lo, the prince of Greece will come in. Truly, I tell you what is firmly written in the decree: nothing will help me prevail against these but your prince Michael."

"Whoa!" said Curious. "This is interesting. He said Michael is a chief prince, and now we learn Michael is connected with Daniel somehow."

Or we would say he's an archangel assigned to Israel.

"But that's not the most interesting thing here: it's not Michael's strength that will prevail against the enemy but the fact that there is a decree that he will do it!"

Why would the decree specify Michael and no other?

"It must be that Michael represents Israel, and so he's looking out for the interests of Daniel's compatriots."

This is your "rules of engagement" in action, Curious. But how does this relate to Israel's future?

"He said Greece will be coming. Maybe there's a timing issue there because the 69-week schedule must be maintained."

11 "And as for me, in the first year of Darius the Mede, I stood up to confirm and strengthen him."

"Apparently this angel was able to do this initially without Michael's assistance."

2 "And now will I show you the truth. Behold, three more kings will stand up in Persia, the fourth being the richest of all by far. And when he gains enough strength through his riches he will go with all force against the army of Greece."

"A more detailed prophecy about the ram."

3 "And a mighty king will stand up who will rule a great dominion and do according to his will."

"So that's Greece's Alexander the Great—or the interpretation of the goat. Fascinating that Daniel was given these details in plain words long before the events occurred."

4 "And when he rises up, his empire will be broken and will be divided toward the four winds of heaven, but not given to his posterity nor according to the empire that he ruled, for his kingdom will be plucked up and given to others besides these."

"This is the four-winged leopard from chapter seven and the goat from chapter nine; now here we have it in plain language."

5 "And the king of the south will be strong, and one of his princes will become strong above him and attain dominion—a great dominion."

"I presume this 'king of the south' is one of the four."

Why don't you look this up, Curious? You could find history on what is called here the "king of the south." That would be the one of Alexander's successors who took over the region that included Egypt.

"Wasn't there a Ptolemy dynasty in Egypt? I'm going to find names where none are given and see how this matches history. This will be interesting. ... Yes, Ptolemy was one of Alexander's generals, not an Egyptian. He became quite powerful. Seleucus is another name: he cooperated with Ptolemy. Seleucus established the Seleucid Empire which he ruled from Antioch. Then we have Ptolemy II who became even more powerful. This was around 306 B.C. ... Now here's something: during that time a library was established at Alexandria in Egypt, and a translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek was commissioned. It's called the Septuagint."¹

6 "And after some years they will join themselves together: the daughter of the king of the south will come to the king of the north to make an agreement, but she will not retain the strength of her arm, and neither will he nor his arm stand, but she will be given up along with those that brought her and he who begat her and he who stood by her in those times."

1. The primary reference for the historical information that Curious comes up with in vs. 5-35 is a series of notes compiled by Chuck Missler that accompany the 2004 Koinia House DVD on the book of Daniel.

“Okay, this happened some years later, about B.C. 250, when a marriage was arranged between Bernice, the daughter of Ptolemy II, and one Antiochus II. Antiochus had to divorce his own wife, Laodiceia, in the deal. Laodiceia reacted fiercely, I would say: she poisoned Antiochus, murdered Bernice, and managed to put her son, Seleucus II, on the throne. By the way, the Septuagint translation was complete by then, and it included the book of Daniel.”

7 *“But out of a shoot from her roots one will stand up in his place who will come against the army and enter into the fortress of the king of the north and will deal against them and will prevail.”*

“That would be Bernice’s brother, Ptolemy III. He took Syria, seized Antioch, and invaded Seleucid territory as far as Babylon.”

8 *“And also he will carry into Egypt their gods with their cast images and with their valuable vessels of silver and of gold. And then he will refrain some years from the king of the north.”*

“The total spoils carried to Egypt included thousands of talents of gold and silver, and thousands of idols. That was 247 B.C.”

9 *“And when he will come into the realm of the king of the south, he will return into his own land.”*

“Two years later Seleucus II marched south against Egypt and got badly defeated. He returned to Antioch with a much smaller army.”

10 *“And his sons will war and will assemble a multitude of great forces, which will come on and overflow and pass through; and they will return and war, even up to his fortress.”*

“I’m amazed that Daniel remembered all this,” Curious remarked. “But maybe he left out some details.

“The two sons of Seleucus II were Seleucus III (who was murdered) and Antiochus III. Antiochus became king in 224 B.C. He reclaimed the fortress at Seleucia and built up a huge army. Then he resumed warring with Egypt.”

“The Egyptian army under Ptolemy IV came up through Judea and met Antiochus III in Lebanon and got defeated. Antiochus went on to capture cities in Judea on both sides of the Jordan. But Ptolemy—he actually had the larger army—eventually defeated Antiochus III in a battle near Gaza. Ptolemy signed a peace treaty with Antiochus and celebrated his victory by touring the area, including Jerusalem where he was prevented from entering the Holy of Holies—naturally. When he got back to in Egypt, he took out his humiliation by persecuting Egyptian Jews.”

Do you have any idea, Curious, why Daniel apparently was not told about that persecution?

“What’s new?” was Curious’ comment. “I’m remembering the book of Esther; and persecution of Jews is hardly noteworthy compared to what Daniel lived through.”

11 *“And the king of the south will be moved with anger and will come forth and fight with him—that is with the king of the north—and he will set forth a great multitude, and a multitude will be given into his hand; his multitude will be lifted up, and his heart will be exalted because he cast down tens of thousands, but he will not prevail.”*

“Some twenty-seven years later Antiochus III moved to take Seleucia from Egyptian rule. This prompted young King Ptolemy IV to advance with a large army to Raphia (south-west of Gaza) where he defeated Antiochus; and he annexed Palestine to Egypt. But this young Ptolemy was otherwise incompetent and wasted his victory.”

13 *“And the king of the north will return and will set forth a multitude greater than the former; and he will come on at the end of his times—years—with a great army and with much substance.”*

“Ptolemy IV died twelve years later (205 B.C.), leaving an infant son, Ptolemy V. Now, Antiochus III, smarting from his defeat at Raphia, assembled an army for the conquest of Egyptian territory. His army was larger than before

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and included a lot of supporting material. This followed years in which he had won victories in the East as far as India."

14 *"And in those times many will stand up against the king of the south; also the children of the violent among your people will lift themselves up to establish their vision, but they will fall."*

"The 'many' that stood up with Antiochus III against the king of the south included Philip of Macedon and also discontented activists from Egypt's vassal states. About that time an Egyptian mercenary attempted to wrest Judea from Antiochus but was defeated after succeeding for a brief period of time."

15 *"So the king of the north will come and cast up a mound and take a well-fortified city. The forces of the south will not stand and neither will his chosen people: there will be no strength to stand. But he who comes against him will act according to his own will, and none will stand before him. He will stand in the glorious land, and there will be destruction in his hand."*

"In 198 B.C. there was a battle at Paneas, a city near Mt. Hermon, in which Antiochus III won a decisive victory over the Egyptian army. But not much is known about it."

17 *"And he will set his face to come with the strength of his whole kingdom bringing a proposal with equitable conditions which he will perform: he will give him the daughter of women to corrupt her; but she will not stand or be for him."*

"Antiochus III set out with warships to attack Cilicia, Lycia, and Caria, which were under Egyptian control, but he met disaster and defeat by none other than Rome, a new power. So he took a different approach: In an attempt to subvert Egypt from within, around 195 B.C., Antiochus gave his daughter Cleopatra in marriage to Ptolemy V along with a dowry that included Phoenicia and Judea, expecting that this would somehow eventuate in him being able to annex Egypt. But Cleopatra became a devoted wife and sided with Egypt."

18 *"After this he will turn his face toward the isles and will take many; but a prince will cause the taunting against him to stop; yes, moreover, he will cause his taunting to turn upon him."*

"Then in 190 B.C., Antiochus III turned toward Asia Minor and crossed the Hellespont to seize part of Thrace. But he was defeated by the Romans at Thermopylae, and he suffered an ignominious defeat in a decisive battle near Smyrna where the Romans forced him to surrender all territory west of the Taurus Mountains and pay a heavy tribute."

19 *"Then he will turn his face toward the fortresses of his own land; but he will stumble and fall, and will not be found."*

"Then Antiochus III turned his attention to strengthening the fortresses and military forces in his own land. To finance his debt and restore his wealth he plundered temples."

20 *"Then in his place one will stand up who will send a tribute collector to go through the glorious part of the kingdom; but within a few days he will be destroyed, neither in anger nor in battle."*

"Antiochus III was succeeded by Seleucus IV, who in order to raise the tribute required by Rome oppressed Israel through taxation. Seleucus IV ruled twelve years; then in 176 B.C. he was murdered by his treasurer who hoped to take over but was out-smarted by Antiochus IV Epiphanes."

21 *"And in his place a contemptible person will stand up, to whom the royal honor of the kingdom had not been given; but he will come during a time of security and will obtain the kingdom by flatteries."*

"Antiochus IV Epiphanes was the brother of Seleucus IV, but he was not in line to be the next king. He posed as guardian of a legitimate successor, and by means of numerous intrigues, this Antiochus IV Epiphanes gained the throne."

22 *"And the overflowing wings of Egypt will be overwhelmed before him and broken; yes, also the prince of the covenant.*

"Prince of the covenant' refers to the High Priest Onias III, who was assassinated by the king's deputy."

23 *"And after an alliance is made with him he will work deceitfully, for he will come up and become strong with a small force. In time of security he will come even upon the richest parts of the province, and he will do that which his fathers have not done, nor his fathers' fathers: he will distribute among his followers prey and spoil and substance; yes, he will plan his devices against the strongholds, only for a time.*

"Unlike his fathers, Antiochus IV Epiphanes robbed the wealthy places in the provinces that were under his control. He attacked his enemies when they least expected it."

25 *"And he will stir up his power and his courage against the king of the south with a great army; and the king of the south with an exceedingly great and mighty army will fight, but he will not stand, for they will devise devices against him. Yes, they that eat of his dainties will destroy him, and though his army will overflow, many will fall down slain.*

"After the death of his mother, Cleopatra, Ptolemy VI Philometer received bad advice regarding Antiochus IV Epiphanes who then swept over his army in 171 B.C. After Antiochus conquered Ptolemy Philometer, the Alexandrians brought his younger brother Ptolemy Physicon to the Egyptian throne."

27 *"And as for both these kings, their hearts will be to do mischief, and they will speak lies to one another at one table: but it will not succeed, for the end will be at the time appointed.*

"Prior to that war, Antiochus IV had taken Ptolemy VI Philometer under his protection. This was in 174 B.C. As uncle and nephew, they ate together at one table, discussing policy and lying about it."

28 *"Then as he returns to his land with great substance, his heart will be against the holy covenant; and he will do his pleasure before returning to his own land.*

"In 168 B.C. this Antiochus Epiphanes came back from Egypt with his plunder, and while visiting Jerusalem he canceled the high priest and helped himself to gold items from the temple. So he returned to Antioch even further enriched."

29 *"At the time appointed he will return once more to the South, but it will not turn out this time as it did formerly, for ships of Kittim will come against him; therefore he will be grieved and on his return will have indignation against the holy covenant and will do his pleasure. (On his return he will have special regard for those who forsake the holy covenant.)*

"In his second campaign against Egypt, Antiochus encountered the Roman navy (Kittim refers to people of the Mediterranean). Humiliated by the Romans, he returned home and oppressed those Jews especially who were faithful to the holy covenant."

31 *"Forces carrying out his orders will profane the sanctuary and violate its fortress and abolish the continual offering, and in its stead they will set up the abomination that makes desolate.*

"In an effort to Hellenize the Jews, Antiochus went to Jerusalem, had copies of their Scripture burned, and abolished the rituals. He set up an image of Zeus and sacrificed a pig on the altar. This was the abomination that horrified religious Jews just as he knew it would. He also killed many of them, took women and children captive, and burned the city. Nice guy. It seems that his methods wouldn't endear them to the Greeks, but some Jews of liberal mind were in favor of abandoning their traditions and going with the flow of civilization."

32 *"And by smooth words he will make godless those who have been unfaithful to the covenant, but the people who know their God will react with strength.*

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“‘Reacting with strength’ refers to what happened around 165 B.C. when the priest Mattathias Maccabeus and his three sons led a successful revolt, after which they cleansed and rededicated the Temple. This event is still remembered and celebrated by Jews each year as Hanukkah.”

33 *“And those who are wise among the people will instruct many, yet they will fall by the sword and by flame, by captivity and by spoil for days.”*

“Antiochus Epiphanes had killed thousands of Jews by the time he went insane in 163 B.C. and died. But the persecution strengthened the loyalty of some to the Mosaic Law and their traditions. They were called the Chassidim (loyal ones). They evolved into the sect known as the Pharisees. Also the Essenes, who isolated themselves near the Dead Sea, came from that beginning.”

34 *“Now when they fall they will receive little help because many will join themselves to them hypocritically.”*

“More Jews joined the nationalist movement when it seemed to be winning, but many of them deceptively remained pro-Hellenist, and some were executed for it.”

35 *“And some of those who are wise will fall in order to refine and purify and make them white, even to the time of the end—because there is yet an appointed time.”*

“The persecution purified the resistance movement. Simon Maccabaeus freed Judea from Syria, yet he never claimed authority for himself beyond being high priest.”

Don’t miss the hint about the future in “there is yet an appointed time,” Curious.

36 *“And the king will do according to his will; he will exalt himself and magnify himself above every god and will speak outrageous things against the God of gods; and he will prosper until the indignation be accomplished, for that which is determined will be done.”*

“What a contrast!” said Curious. “I mean, Antiochus Epiphanes may have tried, but he failed to prosper in the end. This implies a gap with a horrible future for Jews!”

37 *“He will not regard the gods of his fathers nor the desire of women nor will he regard any god; for he will magnify himself above all.”*

“This has the flavor of a modern atheistic dictator who will be flagrantly homosexual.”

38 *“But in his place he will honor the god of fortresses: this god whom his fathers did not know he will honor with gold, silver, precious stones, and pleasant things.”*

“He serves the industrial military complex! Is he their servant or they his?”

In what region is he located?

“The origin of this dictator hasn’t been specified, but the last location of Antiochus might be implied.”

That preceded the empire of Rome.

“If this is the little horn of the last beast, he might be from anywhere in today’s Europe.”

39 *“And he will deal with the strongest fortresses by the help of a foreign god: whosoever acknowledges him he will increase with glory; and he will cause them to rule over many, and will divide the land for a price.”*

“Political maneuvers instead of kinetic war. He might be the head of some European union.”

40 *“And at the time of the end the king of the south will contend with him; and the king of the north will come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots and with horsemen and with many ships; and he will enter into the countries and will overflow and pass through.”*

“This sounds like the grand finale triggered by a breakdown in the balance of his power in the south; then a massive kinetic force from the north jumps at the opportunity.”

That would be Russia.

“If this is Gog and Magog that Ezekiel predicted, their target is Israel.”

41 *“He will enter also into the glorious land, and many will be overthrown; but these will be delivered out of his hand: Edom, Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon.”*

"Arab countries are spared. They must be supportive of Gog's invasion of Israel."

42 *"He will stretch forth his hand also upon other countries; and the land of Egypt will not escape, but he will have power over the treasures of gold and of silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt; and the Libyans and the Ethiopians will be at his steps."*

"Does the rest of the world stand by and let this happen?"

44 *"But tidings out of the east and out of the north will trouble him; and he will go forth with great fury to destroy and to utterly sweep away many."*

"Utterly sweep away many' sounds very bad, like I-hate-to-think-what. But something is missing: it's not clear what happened to that pompous little horn out of the last beast."

45 *"And he will plant the tents of his palace between the sea and the glorious holy mountain; yet he will come to his end, and none will help him."*

"The megalomaniac steps into the vacuum in Israel left by Magog and proclaims himself the victor until something takes him out."

There's no need to wonder what that something is, Curious.

"Yes, of course, there was the rock cut without hands that crushes the iron empire at the end and fills the whole world. So there's good news at the end.

"Now I see the last chapter has Israel's number, curiously enough."

12 *"And at that time Michael will stand up, the great prince who stands for the children of your people; and there will be a time of trouble such as never was since the nation began until that same time, and at that time every one of your people who will be found written in the book will be delivered."*

"It's not clear what Michael does when he stands up."

Someone must be consulting the book.

"What book is this?"

Wasn't the book of life mentioned in a Psalm?

"So this is Jacob's time of testing, not indiscriminate trouble. ... Here in Psalm 69 David is withstanding personal attacks so severe that he asks for his persecutors to be removed from the book of life for their unjustifiable actions."

Yes, but we know Michael is more than a librarian.

"This will be a very dangerous time for the world and Israel in particular. So Michael is there to hold the line."

2 *"And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt."*

"Then the resurrection follows and everyone gets resurrected."

Not all at the same time, obviously.

"What happens to those who have not died at this point?"

Life goes on.

3 *"And the wise will shine as the brightness of the firmament; and those who turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."*

What do you think, Curious? Is it possible to be wise and not turn many to righteousness?

"It's good to be wise, but those who influence others for good get the greater reward."

Look at that verse again, Curious. Does it not have the form of a proverb?

"Oh, I think it's really a couplet stating the same thing over again."

And the implied deduction?

"It sounds like a threat to me. Those who are wise will turn many to righteousness."

Or let's say your gift of wisdom will lead others to right living.

"I know it's not quite literal, but that reward is a bit overwhelming. I never wanted to be a star."

We have stars to look up to, but who does not want to be wise?

"At least my knowledge is increasing."

4 *"But you, O Daniel, shut up the words and seal the book, even to the time of the end. Many will run to and fro, and knowledge will be increased."*

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"This must refer to the time of the end!"
Curious pronounced.

It is a curious thing that Daniel included that warning in his book.

"I'm remembering that Daniel himself had difficulty understanding his visions, so maybe he wondered about this strange warning as well and decided to let the reader wonder too."

5 Then I, Daniel, looked, and, behold, there stood two others, one on the bank of the river on this side and one on the bank of the river on that side. And one of them said to the man clothed in linen who was above the water of the river, "How long will it be to the end of these wonders?"

"Who are these two, I would ask. But it doesn't matter because it doesn't matter to Daniel. He just wants to make sure he understands about when this will happen."

7 And I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the water of the river, say when he held up his right and left hands toward heaven and swore by him who lives for ever: "It will be for a time, times, and a half time; when they have made an end of breaking in pieces the power of the holy people, all these things will be finished."

"This sounds like a crushing three and a half years for these people. It's an awful future to have to look forward to."

8 I heard, but I did not understand, so I said, "O my lord, what will be the sign of these things?" He replied, "Go your way, Daniel, for the words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end."

"That's when knowledge will be increased, I presume."

How? By running to and fro?

"I would like to know how."

"Many will purify themselves and make themselves white and be refined; but the wicked will do wickedly, and none of the wicked will understand; but they who are wise will understand."

"There, he mentions the wise again."

11 "From the time that the continual burnt offering be taken away and the abomination that makes desolate is set up, there will be a thousand two hundred and ninety days."

"That comes to about three and a half years."

But you must admit that the precision is impressive.

"For a prediction that's been made hundreds or even thousands of years in advance, this detail is impressive."

12 "Blessed is he who remains and comes to the thousand three hundred and thirty-five days."

"What happens in that extra forty-five days?"

Think, Curious. An event of the greatest significance remains.

13 "But go your way until your end; for after you rest you will again stand in your assigned place at the end of the days."

"That was a good place to end. If I were Daniel I would count myself fortunate to look forward to resurrection and not to the great tribulation that was promised to them."

Daniel can look forward to being one of the stars in the resurrection. But aren't you curious at all about the blessing promised to those who survive the longest?

"So some will survive the breaking in pieces of the holy people."

Read it again, Curious. It doesn't say that, exactly.

"Or the breaking of their power, actually."

Does "holy" there mean specially sanctified ones, or is it simply following the language that has been used, meaning the people of Judea?

"Obviously by 'holy' he refers to the people of the holy covenant."

Well, Curious, I've enjoyed following you through this book.

"I get the feeling I'm not Curious if I let that one go. The forty-five days keep us from thinking we know everything, because why are they blessed by missing resurrection?"

I found Curious going back over the second half of the book, the last six chapters, which contain the most significant prophetic details. I suggested that he write a condensation of those chapters, preserving whatever he considers to be the most useful. He must have heard me, because he went to work on it. We may describe what follows as a Curious Summary of Daniel Chapters 7-12.

The Future from Daniel's day to Israel's End Times

Chapter 7 – The Overview

Four beasts are four kingdoms: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. Emphasis is on the fourth (most terrifying) beast representing the Roman Empire.

Chapter 8 - Medo-Persia to Greece

The Vision of the Ram and the Goat
Emphasis on the Goat's little horn

Chapter 9 – Daniel's Prayer

The 70 weeks: A schedule of years to Messiah and Beyond

Chapter 10 - Angels Working Behind the Scenes

Chapter 11 - The Grecian Period

The end of Persia to the rise and fall of Greece

Chapter 12 - Israel's Last Days

Israel's Greatest Tribulation and Resurrection

Chapter 7

Seven visions in one:

1) Ten horns representing ten kings: a small but boastful horn crops up while three of the original horns get uprooted.

2) God on his throne in heaven attended by vast numbers, presumably angels. Court is held and books are opened.

3) The boastful little horn loses his war against the saints in court: judgment is passed in favor of the elect of God who are given the kingdom.

4) The beast on which the little horn was carried is killed and sent to the fire.

5) The three other beasts are allowed to live for a time (as their cultural legacy?), but they have no dominion.

6) The Son of Man presents to God and is given overall dominion and glory.

7) All peoples serve him; his dominion is everlasting.

More details:

Out of this final kingdom come ten kings, plus another one, different from the previous kings, and he takes down three of the others. He rails against the Most High and wears down the saints to the point where he is able to take control of their observances and ordinances for three and a half years. But his dominion is taken from him and destroyed forever when the court of heaven judges him and finds him unworthy. Thereafter, the administration of all countries on earth is transferred to servants among the saints of the Most High, and all these administrations serve and obey God in his everlasting kingdom.

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Chapter 8

Daniel sees a ram with two unequal horns, the longer one coming up last, butting north, west, and east: this represents the Medo-Persian empire.

Then a goat with one horn comes out of the west, moving swiftly over the earth and greatly magnifying itself. This horn is Alexander of Greece who died in his prime. Thus the horn suddenly breaks off and four horns take its place going in four directions. These are the four kingdoms that inherit their standing from Greece.

In the latter period of their dominion a small horn appears, representing an insolent king who succeeds by intrigue and becomes a force in the South, the East, and including Israel. Though his influence is great, it is not by true power: he magnifies himself in his heart and by deception he destroys much and forces his will against the host of heaven and causes some of the stars of heaven to fall to earth; and he tramples them down—meaning this little horn elevates itself to equal God Most High (who Commands the host of angels), and thereby brings down leaders and faithful people and prevents them from performing the regular sacrifice. And he ruins their sanctuary. While this little horn destroys many while they are at ease, he gets broken but not by the hand of man.

Daniel is told to conceal the vision because the threat is not immediate.

Comment: This little horn of the goat resembles the late-coming little horn out of the terrible beast which is yet to come! Should it be different? What else would the enemy of the Most High do?

Chapter 9

Daniel was told that 490 (70 weeks of) years had been allocated to fulfill the prophecies concerning his people and their city, Jerusalem. He was given a list of what this would entail:

- 1) finishing the transgression;
- 2) bringing an end of sin;
- 3) making an atonement for iniquity;
- 4) bringing everlasting righteousness;
- 5) sealing up vision and prophecy;
- 6) anointing the most holy.

Comment: I hesitate to touch that list. I think it is holy. I think I see what each element means, but there is a divine ambiguity about the words that I fear would be destroyed if I tried to change the order to make it seem more logical.

The beginning of this time period was specified to coincide with the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem's walls. After 483 (69 weeks of) years the Messiah, the Prince, appears (Jesus Christ did appear on schedule) in a time of distress in Jerusalem (when it had been rebuilt). The Messiah is killed before establishing his kingdom, and the armies of the Roman emperor come like a flood and destroy the city and the sanctuary.

There will be war even to the end: desolation is decreed, but no time span is given until the prince at the end makes a firm covenant with many for one week (the seventieth), but in the middle of the week he will cause the sacrifice and offering to cease; and with such abominations will come one who makes desolate until his complete destruction.

Chapter 10

In response to Daniel's prayer for understanding the meaning of that vision, an angel appears, informing him that he would have come sooner had not the prince of the kingdom of Persia resisted him for twenty-one days—until Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help him. Now, since his assignment had been to contend with the kings of Persia, he must return to it, for a prince of Greece was eager to come. He mentioned that the only help he had was Michael, the angelic prince dedicated to Israel.

Comment: This suggests that the empires of this world, excepting Israel, are basically controlled by demons!

Chapter 11

The angel from chapter ten continues, first mentioning that it was Darius the Mede he was strengthening. Then he told Daniel that three more kings would reign in Persia followed by a fourth who would attain more wealth than all of his predecessors and then make war against the kingdom of Greece [which he lost].

Rise and Demise of Alexander

A mighty Greek will achieve wide dominion and do as he pleases, but his kingdom will be broken and divided into four regions, not given to his descendants nor according to his own plans.

Wars between Syria and Egypt

The king of the southern region [Ptolemy] will gain strength, and one of his princes [Ptolemy II] will become even stronger. North and South will attempt an alliance in which the daughter of the king

of the South [Bernice] will visit the king of the North [Antiochus II] to arrange a marriage, but she will not retain her power nor will he last, but a descendant of hers [Ptolemy III] will take his place, and he will rob the fortress of the king of the North and carry idols and valuable vessels to Egypt. ... There will be campaigns against the king of the South which activists in Judea will take advantage of to achieve their vision, but they will fail. The king of the North [Antiochus III] will capture a well fortified city, resisting the might of the South and doing as he pleases. He will also occupy Judea for a time, with intent to ruin it. He will put forth a seemingly equitable agreement for peace with the king of the South in which he will give his daughter [Cleopatra] to undermine it, but she will not take a stand for him. Then he will turn his face to the coast lands and succeed to some degree until they [Romans] put a stop to his advance and make him pay tribute for his bad behavior. So he will return to strengthen the fortresses of his own land, but he will stumble and fall and be found no more.

Trouble in Judea

In his place will arise one who will send an oppressor to Judea, but within a few days he will be broken (not in battle). And in his place a despicable person [Antiochus IV Epiphanes] will arise, to whom the authority of the kingdom had not been given. He will come during a time of ease and seize the kingdom by intrigue, overturning the established order and taking down the prince of the Jews. This he achieves by deception: After an alliance is made he gains the following of a

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small number people, and during a time of ease he enters wealthy areas and distributes plunder among them, doing what no one before him ever did. Thus he devises schemes against those in power, but only for a time. Yet he will stir up his strength and courage and go against the king of the South, and the king of the South [Ptolemy VI Philometer] will meet him with a strong military force; however, he will not stand, for schemes will be devised to defeat him: those who share his table will break him, and though he activates his great force, many will fall down slain. The hearts of both of these kings will be for evil, and they will speak falsely at the same table; but it will not turn out as expected, for the end is as has been appointed. The king of the North will return to his land with great possessions, and as his heart will be against the Jews, he will take action against them and then return to his own land.

Israel Wins Independence

At the appointed time this king [Antiochus Epiphanes] will attempt to return to the South, but ships from Cyprus will come against him, disheartening him. Yet still being fiercely opposed to the holy covenant claimed by the Jews he will come back south, and after treating peacefully those who have already forsaken the laws and rituals, his forces will come in and profane the sanctuary fortress, abolish the regular sacrifice, and he will set up the abomination of desolation. And by smooth words he will make atheists of those who had merely disparaged the laws and rituals. But the people who know their God will be strong and

take action [Mattathias], and those among the people who have insight will give understanding to many others, even while falling by sword, by flame, by captivity, and by plunder for many days. When they suffer they will get little help, for many will side with them falsely. Some of those who have insight will die in order to refine, purge, and make others pure until the time of the end, because there is still an appointed time of the end.

The Rise of the anti-God

After that, this king will do as he pleases; he will exalt and magnify himself above every god and say outrageous things against the God of gods; and he will succeed until the indignation is finished; for that which is decreed will be done. He will show no regard for the gods of his fathers or for the desire of women, nor will he have regard for any god, but he will magnify himself above all. He will honor fortresses as god, a god whom his fathers did not know: he will honor them with gold, silver, costly stones, and desirable things. And he will take action against the strongest of fortresses that rely on a foreign god. He will give great honor to those who recognize him as supreme and will give them rulership over the population and will apportion land for a price.

At the Time of the End

And at the time of the end the king of the North will storm against the king of the South with chariots, and the king of the South will collide with him with horsemen and many ships. On his way south he will enter lands, overwhelming them as he passes through. He will enter

Israel's land, and many countries will fall, but these will be rescued out of his hand: Edom, Moab, and the foremost of the sons of Ammon. Egypt will not escape, but he will capture the hidden treasures of gold and silver and the desirable things of Egypt with Libyans and Ethiopians pursuing him. But reports from the East and from the North will alarm and dismay him, and he will march forth with great wrath to destroy and kill. And he will pitch the tents of his royal pavilion between the seas and Jerusalem, the beautiful Holy Mountain; yet he will come to his end, and no one will help him.

Chapter 12

There will be a time of distress such as never happened before in the nation's history. At that time Michael, the great prince who guards Daniel's people, will stand, and everyone who is found written in the book will be rescued.

And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake to everlasting life, but the others will be left to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the clear sky, and those who lead the many to righteousness will shine like the stars forever and ever.

Daniel was told to conceal these words and seal up the book until the time of the end—a time when many will go to and fro, and knowledge will increase.

The man dressed in linen whom Daniel saw above the waters of the river was asked, "How long until the end of wonders?" The answer: it would be for a time, two times, and half a time.

And as soon as they complete shattering the power of the holy people, all this will be completed.

Many will be purged, purified, and refined, but the wicked will continue to act wickedly. None of the wicked will understand, but those who have insight will understand.

From the time that the regular sacrifice is abolished and the abomination of desolation is set up, there will remain 1,290 days [3.5 years+30 days @ 360 days/year]. How blessed is he who keeps waiting and reaches the 1,335 [45 more] days!

Daniel was assured that after he had entered his rest he would stand again for his allotted portion [his resurrection] at the end of the days.

Comment: Why, if the 69 weeks played out as predicted, was the 70th week left hanging without a marker to show when it begins? I understand that this is all about Israel and that there was a long time after Christ came when Israel ceased to exist as a Jewish state. But now Israel appears on the map again, and it has been so for more than seven years. Is there some mistake? I find that hard to believe, because everything about the 69 weeks turned out to be accurate. I suppose the answer will appear if I keep reading, but I can't help being curious about it already. Enough has been given here in this book of Daniel to show that the world will be a much different place after the 70th week. It will be like King Solomon's theocracy on a world-wide scale. Travel and communication now makes that possible.